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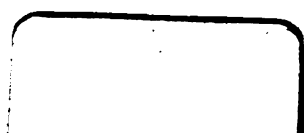
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A FOREST
IDYL

—
TEMPLE OLIVER



H.W. Wilson Co.,
5 Feb. 1915

James O
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A Forest Idyl

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BY
TEMPLE OLIVER

Jeanie Oliver Davidson Smith



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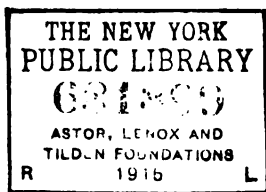
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TO
JAMES OLIVER, ESQ.
OF
EDINBURGH
—
EARLY PLAYMATE AND
CONSTANT FRIEND

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PUBLIC
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FOREWORD

In this age of conservation of the forces that sustain life, certain Educators have found themselves face to face with a problem.

One hundred millions of people in our land:—how shall life be made a joy instead of a struggle, and how shall they be fed?

The answer has come in tangible form. The authorities in high places, both Federal and State, have extended aid for the upbuilding of schools and colleges, conditionally, the hope being that the youth of our land may have an opportunity if they wish it for an elective course of study. The dream-ideal of these men may not have been fully realized, but there is hope that it will be. It was this, that there should be no danger of developing hands, feet and muscle at the expense of brain, heart and imagination. And in this view the classics were of such extreme value that there should be no minimizing them. Emulating the men of tireless energy who bade the earth bring forth blossom and fruit long before the aid of invention had lightened labor far in excess of the people's needs, yet who made their classical studies paramount, wherever possible, the same ideals might prevail, that in the enthusiasm of youth the new and problematical might not

FOREWORD

usurp authority or grow critical of the established classical. There was need for both and room for both — and the grand men which the earlier régime had given to the world should be made their exemplars.

There might be a danger, however, in the fact that the dry statistical,—the dollar and cent methods,—might possibly prevail in this effort to make the most of certain contingencies of demand, and for an offset to this condition, the compelling humanness of Homeric legend and story was needful, also the poetry of the soil to charm and to refine, the romance of the strange affinities and antagonisms of plant life, the studied laws of natural selection noted, until the elements of wonder should preclude the possibility of indifference, while reverence and humility would invite the co-operation of minds that were almost ready to believe that this little earth was a sentient thing from center to circumference and that some great Influence was at work for the development of the highest humanity.

TEMPLE OLIVER.

PART I

CHAPTER I

Clarence Bartruff held a conversation with himself in the solitude of his own room at his boarding house. He had turned off the light and sat in a level slant of moonlight, his window wide open. The day had been oppressively hot and now it seemed as if the air had fainted, and the "pulse of nature had stood still and ceased to beat." But it was not the oppressiveness of the evening which troubled him as he sat there, head in hands, trying to unravel the thread of destiny. He was well born but unfortunate. He had, it might be said truthfully, lost both his parents. Before he had passed into his teens his mother had died, his father had married again.

Without help he had struggled up to a position of trust, even as a youth, in his native city. Later, an indomitable will had carried him through the University, he had received his diploma from the Law School and yet the greatest of all difficulties had yet to be surmounted. For one whole year he had been trying to climb this hill of success, but found himself no nearer the summit than when he had started out, and minus hope at last. "What is a young fellow to do who does not own a dollar?" he asked himself. "How can he compete

with those who inherit millions? How can he build up a law practice when people strangely enough in this young city, are resolved never to have any disputes of the kind that need a lawyer's intervention?"

Utterly disheartened by seeming to be so much the mere football of fate, the thought passed through his now partially disordered mind: "Why not blow one's brains out and end the whole thing? Why not do this and find out what the next incarnation is to be?" He even went so far as to take the revolver out of his drawer and examine it with an intense and growing excitement. Where might life be ended the most surely and suddenly? Should it be heart or head? The frenzy once unchecked began to overpower him. What had his whole life been but a strife against fate? Could this go on forever?

Before he had fully decided where to place the muzzle, a picture flashed before him. It was that of a beautiful woman whom he loved. Why he had felt so especially hopeless of her love just at this time he could not tell, except that he was in a desperately hopeless mood about everything under the sun. The bitter part of it was that in her case his own slowness and backwardness had been the means of a misunderstanding. That at an earlier day she had loved him he had had some occult reason to believe; — it was far from occult had he only known her heart — but months ago he had lost her forever, as it seemed. It was through the same

untoward fate which had followed him from birth. He, a penniless young man without prospects, could not ask Eleanor Norwood to share his life, although the hope that he might some day be in a position to do so, had been next to his hope of heaven. But how could she divine his thoughts? He had never given them utterance to her; waiting, waiting to be in a position to do so, and finally went away to the University Law School saying no word. He would have written her all that was in his heart, but a report came to his ears while he debated the question, and also that of his own capability of making money enough to support her, while he was still a hundred miles away from her, that some handsome stranger was having a great flirtation with her. The result was that his man-soul had rebelled. She ought to have known his sentiments by intuition. Why not?

His glass had told him that he was far above the average both in appearance and in intellect. He was a college man; an athlete but not an athletic devotee; a clubman of integrity of purpose, trusted by his comrades. He had the gift of public utterance, and in both law and politics he could move his crowds to a tremulous silence of approval, deeper oftentimes than unthinking applause.

But note the inconsistency of this casuist. What were the plaudits of the multitude if he had failed to impress one — the one of all others whom he had wished to move? Yet wait. Something lingered in his mind, something that gave a pleas-

urable emotion. Two hours ago he had passed her in the street. She was in the Mayor's automobile with the Mayoress and her daughter, making a pretty picture in her close fitting modern hood. Catching a sudden sight of his lifted hat, in swift personal recognition, she had leaned far out of the machine to return his bow, and then they, one and all, flashed on, while for a moment he stood with steadfast gaze looking after them.

"Hello! I should say that was going some!" remarked an acquaintance, stopping near him, and looking after them. "Are you afraid of a smash up?"

"No, not yet," he answered laconically, turning away his gaze from the vanishing auto. The other young man, adjusting his gait to that of Clarence and stepping briskly along by his side, remarked, apropos of no question:

"There's to be a swell function out at the Lake House to-night. By the way," ostentatiously taking out his watch and hastening his steps towards the hotel — "it's time I should be getting into my evening clothes. You didn't go to the ball game this afternoon, did you? It was awfully exciting."

For some reason Clarence felt like pitching him down the elevator shaft, as they entered side by side. They had frequently met in elevator and corridor, but had never spoken many words to each other before, and a feeling of relief came that this brusque young fellow did not go as far as his own floor.

It did not help Clarence in his mood of self-abasement that this young man whom he despised, could sail into the haven of so-called Society, simply because he was the idle son of a rich man without sensibilities to deter him from rushing in where others held back with modest reticence and much natural pride. There might have been a very human touch of envy, too, that this citizen of a glorious country could pose as a specimen of the man who is received socially; that he could gain access to the little select circles of this small city as if he were really worth while. But were they not all provincial? — all except Eleanor? Not only was she a typical college girl, but she had been brought up abroad, and had some of the largeness of other continents in her make-up; but alas! she had left both mother and father in the cemetery on the other side of the world, and her brother, her only near relative, at school there. She was indeed alone, poor thing, and needed protection from such as this vain puppet he had met just as she should have had from that adventurer of the past year, who well knew that she had "money to burn," and had, too, evidently made the attempt to avail himself of her kindness and consideration. Thank God for the fact that the Press story of her engagement had been disproved. It was a lie of the advertiser's concocting. That she had had the spirit to refute it at the time was much to her credit. It had been a mystery to Clarence Bartruff that this item of the Press had

awakened any comment whatever, but some persistent rumor had been in circulation at the time that this adventurer, who had gained acceptance to that circle, had been a fugitive from justice, and when it was found that fate had followed him with relentless haste, and that he had lost his life in a distant city, in an automobile accident, there was none to mourn his untimely end.

Had Clarence known the truth, he would have been grateful for his own dignity of character which had so impressed her in the difference discerned between himself and some of the other admirers of her charms; that the way would have been prepared for the dearer companionship of lovers rather than friends; but it is sometimes hard to convince a thwarted will. Still, he had lost no degree of the admiration with which she had inspired his youthful fancy and, later, his manhood's prime.

True, he had recently been asked by herself to perform a little service for her, in the matter of settling a property claim in a distant county and transferring the deed of a building with its monthly rental, to the brother, Walter Norwood, younger than herself by three years, who was at this time studying in a German University. This plan would insure him the means of carrying the course of study through without the annoyance of planning ways and means. Had Clarence been more skilled in the ways of women, he might have seen that this act of coming to him for counsel was

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merely the act of a delicately minded woman to show her regard for himself.

Through it all he had worked with a will for her benefit, and had succeeded beyond expectation, outwardly holding aloof from her lest in the provincial attitude of the young city, with its sharp forked tongue, any shadow of gossip might be brought upon her. He was the more particular about this because of the former foolish talk, nay, not only foolish but cruel, which showed the presence of a backbiting spirit in the community, and this fact had made him doubly careful, even fastidious in his communications with her. This hostage to the proprieties was certainly demanded in a state of society which was far more ready to ascribe evil motives than good.

Well had he performed his task, but what reward for him beyond the payment of his work like any other hired worker, a note of thanks, with payment of his fee, and now — the end of everything! Not even the excuse of business relations any more after all was settled, to keep up the intimacy.

But wait! Her face momentarily flashed before him and her spiritual nearness suddenly had wrested the weapon from his hand. He had received a "wireless" communication from her, a flash of spiritual insight. He laid the weapon away with a shudder. The spell of fierce excitement was broken. He no longer railed against the inequalities of fate nor the bitter cruelties of this seething world of humanity.

In laying away his weapon in the drawer, he came across that dainty little note of thanks. He took it close to the window to trace out the characters which he had already read more than once, but strange to say there seemed to be a deeper meaning even in the few, concise words. There was really no need to have written the note. She had paid him in full. She had not asked him to call, it is true; she had said nothing to signify that she even wished him to do so, and would he have liked it under the present circumstances if she had? But still, there was a subtle something. There was a faint fragrance of rose leaves about the note; it was like the delicate fragrance of her own clothing which had almost intoxicated him into making some confession of his feeling towards her, even when deep in the dry statistics of the business she had detailed for him; but he had then to fortify himself by saying "she will never, never be free from the remembrance of a luxury that I can never give her; she is forever lost to me." And yet, when he thought of what a black world this would be without her love, he was bitter in his regret that he had missed this joy out of his own life.

He felt unrestful still and the thought of hopeless plodding to reach even the lower heights of the hill of success still weighed heavily; but with it was now the soothing mental assurance of some warmer sentiment on her part than mere friendship of a commonplace kind. Why he had received this

sudden assurance was a mystery; but this thought lifted him into a region of partial contentment and repose. There was before his mental vision still that pictured face. It was borne in upon him with strange insistence that she did care for him.

He thought he would read awhile to induce drowsiness, but on going to the window to draw down the shade, he discovered that there had been a sudden and entire change in the atmosphere. Clouds drifted across the moon and near the horizon was a bank of cloud emitting angry flashes and louder and louder mutterings of thunder.

Still the spell of some near presence seemed to envelope him and he saw no reason now why he should not indulge his sweet day dream of winning her for himself.

The dainty little note he still held in his hand, and returning to the window to note the progress of the storm, he discovered to his consternation that the rain had increased to such an extent that his half-formed purpose to go to her, to lay bare his heart before her and meet his fate, would have to be abandoned.

Soon the heavens were entirely overcast. Flash after flash followed with louder and louder mutterings of thunder. Rain began to fall in torrents with peals of thunder echoing in terrific reverberations. Finally a crash came as of the end of all things, and a jet of flame lit up the darkness. The stable adjoining the hotel had been struck by lightning. It was on fire! He knew that there were a

couple of horses fastened there, and without waiting to think about himself, he rushed out in the face of the storm, reached the stall, and throwing a covering over their heads led them out to safety. He had never thought of overcoat or covering for himself, but clad in light weight summer clothing, performed his self appointed task wondering now in his excitement what strange disturbance of his mental faculties had led him a few moments before to think of ending his life! Action, action soon drove all such half insane purposes from his mind and his mental state was again normal. Through the beating rain he started with the purpose of leading the span of horses towards the nearest livery, mounting to the back of one of them as the street seemed suddenly deluged. The water now had spread from side to side of the principal street and seemed like a river in volume. He passed the house of his friend Eleanor Norwood, but all was dark.

He struggled on with the horses he had saved, pushing valiantly through the blinding storm. Suddenly a cry pierced the darkness, taken up by many voices, "A flood! a flood! the upper dam has burst its bounds and whole buildings are being swept away!" He quickened the pace of the horse he was riding, leading the other by the halter, when he fortunately met the owner of them, a physician of the city, who had been making frantic efforts to reach the stable and save his property.

Leaping off, Clarence passed them over to their

surprised owner, waiting for no thanks, and ran with the crowd to a buttressed bridge on which many people were standing watching the toppling over of an immense factory which was in the path of the flood. It was still lighted by the lurid reflection of the fire. "There it goes!" cried a dozen voices. "There goes the old factory, swept down by the flood! It is actually swirling like a feather in the swollen stream, it will pass right under the bridge!" In the excitement no one had noticed the trembling of the bridge. It had seemed as immovable as fate, but as the *débris* of the great factory struck it, lo, the old bridge parted in the middle without a moment's warning, and many were plunged into the seething flood. Clarence went down with the rest. The agonized cries of the victims scarcely rose above the howling of the storm and the rush of the river. People on the bank, frantic in their efforts to save, but powerless, could only send an impotent cry to Heaven and hide their eyes from the terrible sight. A few were rescued, while others clutching at swaying limbs which overhung the bank, and clinging there until strength and presence of mind returned sufficiently to enable them to scale the bank by means of the merciful branches.

Of this number was Clarence Bartruff. He had been swept down by the force of the current to a point some distance below the city, but was so dazed that for a time he did not know whether it was to be life or death, even after he had gained a

foothold of comparative safety. Utterly exhausted he lay on the wet loam, breathing heavily, yet with an active mind, shuddering to think how nearly he had come in a moment of frenzy to taking his own life. He shuddered at his double nearness to eternity and was humiliated by his own cowardice.

The storm was abating. Clarence could see a star shining, one lone star in the storm-swept heavens, but day was not yet breaking. No; it was only a glimpse of star worlds. A clump of trees half bent to the ground by the force of the hurricane seemed to remind him by their pathetic weakness of his own fallen state; how one moment of the elemental forces of nature could humble him in the very dust and make him feel his own nothingness. He could breathe more easily now, his strength had partially returned and he arose from his prostrate position; but sank back with the strange sensation of deathly weakness. Was this the feeling when people fainted away? Was it death? He had no desire now to die!

With the half dazed feeling that he must have fallen from that star in a dream, and that this could not be his world, with closed eyes he tried to think. He did not know just where he was; and did not care. He was really stranded about a mile and a half from the collapsed bridge, on the city side of the river, almost in the open, in the neighborhood of some mills; — flouring mills most of them, but all the wheels were still and no dusty miller to be

heard or seen prowling about in the fitful dark. He felt himself alone in the world. As he looked up to that one struggling star swept over by racing clouds, he thought coherently now, that God never meant any of his creatures to pass through such mental agony as he had endured before he sought the weapon for the ending of his life; that the impulse had passed when some telepathic signal had been sent to him out of the unknown. But, after all (he moaned aloud) the state of society which would extend no help to the struggling soul but bow down to worship success, without helping to success, deserved nothing at his hands. He would leave it and pass out into the world a free man. He would wield a free lance. People would think he had been drowned. (Again he shuddered as he recalled the buffeting of the waters in their swirling intensity.) One person might mourn his loss, for a day perhaps, and then console herself with the inevitable, and that would be the end of it. As he thought of Eleanor, his emotional nature responded to the nerve shock and courage faltered. For weeks and months mental depression had sapped his vitality, and naturally he was of a jovial turn, full of humor and finding the bright side of things. But like many young and ambitious Americans, his mental gifts had placed him in a position that his finances would not warrant. Again and again he had refused an invitation to dinner among the so-called "swell set," simply because his threadbare dinner coat would tell the tale that he was too

poor to buy another. But none of these things came to his mind now. His one desire was simply that he might gain strength enough to get away from the wet bank and not die there.

He heard a sudden sound of hoofs over the sodden ground and within a stone's throw of him was a horse! Not one of those he had rescued, but another. It was clambering up the bank, breathless, dripping, snorting like a wild creature, and Clarence lay in its way, almost paralyzed. The horse came closer, and sniffed at the prostrate form, while Clarence, welcoming this living thing in his dire extremity, calmed it by a caressing word.

The sound of the river's rush was in his ears, and soon the companionable horse was forgotten, and all his plans.

He attempted again to rouse himself from his lethargy. His clothes were wet and he was numb with the cold. He thought, almost incoherently again, that the warmth of the horse, if he could only get up and lean against it, might bring some warmth and strength to him. He realized, momentarily, that there had been a terrific cloudburst and there must have been two fires in different parts of the city. What a night of horrors! but now, his senses were benumbed. Should he carry out his half intention of riding away through the darkness of the black morning and altogether losing his identity? But there was the thought of Eleanor, the one person in the world whose pictured face had saved him from attempted suicide. She prob-

ably never dreamed of his love, for he had never told her — how little he knew a woman's intuition.

How did he know if she were alive? This thought startled him, held him, and decided him not to go on his wild ride away to the unknown, but as soon as he was able, to go back and find her. The next moment, he was horrified by hearing a deep reverberation, and a sudden trembling and rocking of the earth beneath him, which threw him side-wise on his face, and the startled horse sprang away from him towards the woods in the near distance. One who has never felt such an elemental shock of unknown forces, cannot imagine the awfulness of the sensation. The utter helplessness and insignificance of the human being in the power of some terrible calamity, the fear of going down, down alive into the very bowels of the earth, or helpless in the power of some dynamic force, the impotence of the cry to the far Heavens and to the God of the Universe for help, the paralysis of feeling with the terror caused by every fresh pulsation of the once thought solid earth,—

“When Horror's hounds their leashes slip
And on us rush at will!”

“And this hand would have robbed me of life three hours ago, if I had carried out my blind purpose!” he said aloud, clenching his hand until the nails bit into the flesh of the palm.

His tumultuous thoughts were now lost in a strange syncope. Just at this moment the fright-

ened horse came galloping back toward him, head erect, ears back, eyes aflame; but with the instinct of companionship so pronounced in either man or the lower animals when fear dominates, it stopped near Clarence, recognizing the compelling power of the human being. The calming effect of the human hand would also have been felt had he been close enough, for Clarence had always loved a horse. But still he was unable to leap upon the back of this equine friend, as a few hours before he had done in one hand-spring when trying to save the doctor's horses, and he was unwillingly forced to realize that man is very much at the mercy, at times, of his sensory nerves.

He was suddenly seized again with an almost mortal chill, and for a few moments he felt he was almost in the grasp of death, and no wonder. In the excitement of the previous evening when he had come near the portals of that suicidal door to the entrance of the vast unknown, he had been under too fierce excitement to think of anything except his uncanny resolve to take his own life. He failed to recall the fact that he had not tasted food in many hours, possibly days. He sank back in a coma of exhaustion.

CHAPTER II

Along one of the deserted streets which led to the collapsed bridge sped a young girl on an errand of mercy bent. While the shouts of the wounded and the dying could still be heard above the raging of the swollen river, and while people were frantic with fear of another explosion — the first had been caused by a fire reaching a building where dynamite had been stored — her mind was intent upon but one purpose.

“*Clarence Bartruff is drowned!*” This was the cry she had heard in the street. The midnight blackness still lingered except where some star above her had been swept clear, and its intermittent glow only made the black darkness more menacing and weird. Through this forbidding gloom might have been seen the slight girlish figure struggling along the bank, while a low moan of fear or foreboding seemed to accompany her, a lament in monotone. “Clarence Bartruff drowned? No, no, no! it cannot be!” He so strong, such a swimmer! Even if he fell in this mad river, the swirling speed of the water would be nothing to him. Die? He could not die like this! Five hours ago he was well and beautiful and strong, and yet I didn’t insist on their stopping and taking him in with us.

The whole day was lost to me, and now! Now! Now! He couldn't die! There's a bend in the river here. He knows every inch of it. Dead or alive, though, I must find him!" She hastened her steps to a run along the bank, looking down and listening as if she would compel the black rushing stream to give up its dead at her behest. Some sort of dark military cape covered her shoulders, her thin white dress hung limp about her in wet folds, and her white shod feet now spattered with mud and soaked with rain, almost sank in the oozy, slippery ground. Suddenly she stopped. She had almost fallen headlong over a prostrate form. Could it be he? "Is he dead?" With the touch of the blind she tried by her sensitive fingers to read the alphabet of his features. "Yes, it is Clarence; but, oh, heavens! here is blood dripping from a wound in the temple. Such a wound!"

She tried to find a pulse, a beating heart; but the chill of death was there, until she tore apart the wet clinging vest and placed her ear at his throat and chest. "Oh, God! he may live if he could only get warmth!" She threw off the heavy cape and covered him with its folds, baring her own fair shoulders to the black night now almost free from the heavy downpour of the elements, and she set about stanching the blood from the wound. It was a jagged cut just back of the temple. A flimsy bit of lace torn from her bodice was used to staunch the flow. His moist fair hair was now laid back from the wound, where it had become matted and

stained, and then resting her own fair weight against a boulder which flanked the root of a tree, she drew that poor limp and seemingly lifeless head to her bosom and held it there, her eyes piercing the darkness for some near clump of weeds or some pool of rain-filled, health-bestowing water, to be the means of clearing away the blood soaked, grimy substance from face and hair, and watch for returning life.

“Water, water everywhere
Nor any drop to drink,”

might have been her refrain, but at her side was a clump of weeds which might help in the emergency. If the plantain leaf was there it would be for healing. The blessed herb known to the ancients, and used by their wise men since the world began. Again she groped in the dark, grasping for the weed, and she found that it was indeed that palm-shaped leaf with its silken finish, and reaching out gathered with her disengaged hand, a full cluster of them, applying them to the wound, bathing the blood from brow and cheek and lips, with the wet leaves.

The soothing nature of the act imparted something of the abundant vitality of her own person, and suddenly through that blood-stained temple a pulse began to beat, and dark, questioning eyes opened at last to look into the heaven of her eyes that had in them an answering gleam of deep tenderness, had there been light enough to see it.

Eleanor Norwood saw plainly that there had been no real recognition in his hasty glance in the still half darkness which surrounded them, and she rejoiced that this was the case, for long before full daylight should appear, she must induce a greater warmth to the feebly-beating heart, or he might die without coming to full consciousness.

Besides, she had a work to perform with the meager implements which came to her hand, to staunch the flow of blood still more effectively, was her object, having bathed the forehead and face with the wet, healing plantain leaves, she bound one of the smoothest of them about the wound, keeping it in place with her handkerchief. He had sunk again into unconsciousness, much to her alarm, but the pulse was stronger and the heart was perceptibly beating. Her little military cloak still covered him, but her own thinly clad shoulders were shivering. But what mattered that if he should live? "Oh, if he should not live after all!" she moaned, "and nobody within call!"

His head, bound in its lacy linen bandage, still lay against her bosom, one free hand of hers was all that she could use to accomplish her healing mission. Stooping a little, she swept the circuit of his noble face with the hand which had so deftly ministered to him, and kissed the parted lips.

As if electrified by this action, his eyes opened once more and in the growing dawn, he looked again. He partly lifted himself from the recum-

bent position, then nestled back with the motion of a weary child.

"Still he doesn't know me, and he sinks back in my arms like a tired baby. But he will wake again to full consciousness soon, for even his hands are becoming moist and warm."

Through banks of drifting cloud the crimson promise of the morning, the dawn, was trying to penetrate, but when again the welcome sun should appear, what a world of devastation and ruin he would look upon! Wreckage was still floating down the river and strewn along the banks. Fires were raging in different parts of the city casting their lurid reflections upon the scene and daylight had not yet fully returned.

She soon began to feel the reaction. It was so cold, so cold! She lifted the corner of the cloak and threw that portion of it over her own shoulders, feeling the relief. When he should revive again, she would keep it in this position between his face and hers, fearing any sudden shock or any deep emotion, when life seemed to have such a slender hold upon him. How long would it be? Her own arm was numb, her little wet feet paralyzed.

Gently she released her hold of him, but how could she place the poor wounded head down on the damp earth? She only held him a little closer, but kept the cloak well up to her face. The motion seemed to rouse him to a greater degree of consciousness and wakefulness than he had as yet manifested. He leaned forward.

"Where am I? Who is beside me?"

No answer at first.

"I have had a dream that I was in the water, and somebody found me and drew me up on the bank!"

And then in a moment he was away again! How expressive the Scottish phrase—"he is away!" Eleanor knew now that she could safely keep him sheltered from the wind of that dark morning with the chill of the receding storm in its hold, and herself, too, comparatively warm with that blessed bit of the cloak. Her young vitality had asserted itself royally. She knew now that it was only the deathlike sleep of extreme weakness from which he would arouse stronger and refreshed. She had time now to think of the effect of her presence when he should have discovered it. She knew that he had loved her from boyhood, but still she was prepared for the shock which in his Puritan ethics her presence there, and her own act might give him, but in her wise little way she had a plan to propose. "If the dear God will only give him back to me, that is all I ask."

Suddenly he roused himself slightly and said in a natural tone of voice:

"What's the matter with my head?"

He tore off the wet bandages with a returning vitality in the action, and then to her surprise he reached up and removed the dark fold of the cloak with no longer a nerveless hand, although it sunk again to his side, but not before he had given a long look into her tear-stained face.

"Eleanor Norwood!"

He caught and held fast one of the stiff little hands, but said no word. She feared that the silence was ominous of a more dreaded — a longer, a speechless silence, but would not yet trust herself to speak, or break the strange spell, but she knew that his heart had not stopped its beating. She hesitated to speak. Her chattering lips for very fear could not yet bestow a smile upon the upturned face. He seemed only too contented with his position to change it.

"You have had a terrible wound, Mr. Bartruff, in your left temple," she said at last. "It bled profusely; but the bleeding has stopped now."

"You are cold, you are frozen," he said hurriedly, in a natural tone, and made a movement to envelop her with the cape from his own shoulders. By this act she knew that he had come to himself.

"You needn't wonder that you are weak and faint," she continued. "You would have bled to death in an hour if someone hadn't found you." She said this in such a natural, every-day tone that there was no constraint.

"In my dream, an angel came," he murmured. "The fragrance of rose leaves lingers yet."

A smile illumined his features. The morning light was merciless in its revelations of the seams and scars which the cruel water had made, but of the change he was not aware, and Eleanor would say to herself that every bruise and scar endeared him to her.

CHAPTER III

As the welcome light of the early morning began to break upon the scene of devastation, Eleanor Norwood might have been discerned hastening towards the protection of the old mill which, so near at hand, gave the only promise of immediate shelter. This roof would at least keep him from the further deluge of rain which some of these angry clouds threatened, but for his sake she must find out what were the conditions there. She had gathered enough from his broken words to know that he seemed to have a frenzy of dislike to the thought of going back to the city, and in her own wise woman's way, she knew that to go back with his countenance so marred as it was at this moment by the cruelties which the timbers of the old bridge when it fell, had impressed upon his naturally fine, beautiful profile, would only excite derisive comment. Could she not first nurse him back to health? If not to beauty, at least to a little of his old perfection of feature?

She had left him feeling comfortably warm and patient, but not able to move, as she went to make the investigations. The back-ground of the gnarled root of the tree which had been her own support, was now his to lean against, and she had

hardly been able yet to judge of his entire sanity. But the die had been cast. Her lot had been to save his life, she would not leave him now, unless she could be assured that his case demanded hospital treatment; but his strange antipathy to the thought of returning homewards, decided her to let him have his way, to humor him in this desire for the open country, for this strange desire she had discovered in his broken utterance; and besides, wild as the scheme was, it was not an impossibility. It might have been the plea of her own heart had she listened calmly to its promptings.

To do her full justice, she deemed that this wish of his might be nothing more than the vagaries of a brain racked with a sudden culmination of troubles, or the jar of the severe wound on the temple, so near the vital seat of reason and reflection.

Her own state of mind was hardly normal. From the time that the Mayor's automobile, with his own family had reached his residence after midnight, she had hardly been natural. They had insisted on her remaining with them in view of the blackness of the threatening clouds, and her reply: "It is but a step. It is only the opening of the garden gate, you know." And then came to her startled ears, that cry of horror, passing from lip to lip, "The bridge — the bridge! Clarence Bartruff is drowned!" But surely that was in a past state of existence!

"If I can only find any kind of nourishment for my poor boy," she continued tenderly as a mother

might in a crisis of some disease, "I'll have him well yet, and for that matter, I am starved myself." This, on her speedy journey towards the mill and still more rapid return, after her investigations.

And what of Clarence when he saw this strangely-clad girl-woman speeding back through the field towards the black bulk of the mill? Moment by moment he had begun to feel life returning and with it a quickened memory. If he had suffered a species of aphasia caused by the injury, he could think consecutively now, and the dominant thought was of the beautiful face which had looked down upon him, the white breast on which he had leaned, and the voice which was to him a part of the harmony of the spheres. But what had happened to him that he could not stand? Was it the effort to battle with the flood which had so nearly buffeted the life out of him, or had he been struck by the lightning shaft, or, oh, horrible thought, was he paralyzed?

He reached down and, in his excitement, dealt his limbs a blow that might have brought about the result he dreaded, but soon came to a definite consciousness that his nerves could still answer to shock and he felt infinitely relieved.

It had seemed to him that Eleanor was a long time away; she had indeed gone far afield. It was certainly not far to the mill and back again. He thought humorously of the drug *hasheesh*, that drug which intensifies time to its victims; for in-

stead of aphasia now, there was such a quickening of life-blood to the brain that he could think even more intensely than ever before. With a great effort he changed his position and when he saw her in the distance in her peculiarly quick, girlish step, almost flying over the rough edges of a field of ripened oats, keeping close by the fence to avoid the occasional pools of standing water, he thought he might be able to rush and meet her; but his thumping heart warned him not to be reckless in act even if he was reckless in speech, for with the impetuosity of thwarted youth he took her by the hand, by both hands, as she came forward and stooped over him questioningly and without a word of parley or excuse said:

"Eleanor Norwood, will you marry me?"

Was it the rose color of the early dawn, or flush of unwonted exercise, or the blood surging back to her heart after the surprise of the question, or the delight to see him in a normal mental state, or was it all and everything combined?

Whatever it was, he was pleased with what her glowing countenance expressed. Surprised as she was, she liked his impetuosity. She was astonished too at the quickened vitality of his mental state, but her smile was his reward, and would still have been his reward, had he known that just at that moment it was born by the partly nervous, partly humorous outcome of the situation, that he did not in the least suspect how small a portion of his handsome face was visible between the ridges and chan-

nels which the wound had made, and also the queer outlines of her own attempts at healing. But her perfect answer was a kiss on the forehead between the scars.

Then to his surprise and to the relief of the intensity of the situation, she showed that she had brought with her a tin dipper full of cold spring water and insisted on his taking it, at least a portion of it.

He took the tin cup eagerly. Between laughter and thanks and deep admiration on his part, she told him of finding the dipper which hung beside the running spring, washing it clean and bringing it for them both.

The cup with its contents was to them like the ambrosia of the gods, and it was not long before Clarence felt so much stronger that he was able to reach the shelter of the old mill, assisted by her willing support, and favoring a badly sprained knee.

On her first trip, Eleanor's quick eyes had discovered a great pile of empty meal bags on a shelf, and these she pulled down and made of them an improvised seat or couch and persuaded him to make use of it, for she saw that he was getting white again about the lips. Those alarming symptoms soon passed away, and they began to talk with the informality of their condition and mutual interests.

"Before we are here another minute, Eleanor, I have a confession to make. Something that has

humbled me. I was a coward and afraid to face life. I will tell you, dearest, that but for your face which came between me and danger, last night, I should have ended my life by my own hand!—

“Yes! I must tell you! It was hours before the river experience, but that brought me to my senses with a vengeance.”

She grew pale, beneath all her former flush.

“Why, why was it possible for you to get into such a state as that?” She shuddered and hid her face.

“I had grown so bitterly discouraged,” he answered. “I had chosen the Law as my profession, but had no hope of making any financial success, unless in the clutches of Trusts or Corporations all bolted and barred against a beginner.”

“You were ill. You were run down by hard study. I could see you were getting thinner every day. I saw you passing to your office and back, and I knew it.”

“Another thing. I loved you, Eleanor. I believe that I’ve loved you all my life, but the utter hopelessness of winning you under these conditions, added to my trouble, made me ready to end it all.”

She gave his cheek a caress, smoothing it with delicate fingers, and looking up most sympathetically as if she fain would read all his soul. She could not accuse him of cowardice, but she shrank from the thought of suicide in absolute terror. But she would not chide. This was no time for accusations.

"But you have lost that feeling now?" she asked.

"Entirely. I know now that life is worth living."

Her smile of comprehension cheered him. She hoped with him that the despondency was forever banished, and was assured of it by his cheery smile. She hoped with rather humorous forethought that he would not very soon have the luxury of a looking-glass, or he might want to try it again! but this thought she did not communicate.

"You said the thought of me kept you from doing that dreadful thing?"

"Yes, in the strangest way. You seemed to appear before me. I seemed to see your every feature —"

They could talk about everything now. Time had no wings. Eternity was theirs for the taking.

"How strange!" said Eleanor. "I had something of the very same experience. It was just before the storm. Suddenly you appeared before me as in a picture, but so pale, so haggard. Since the awful storm and that dynamite explosion, I thought that sudden picture of you — that mental vision — must have been caused by some electrical phenomenon. I never expected to find you alive. I had so wanted you to go to the reception last night. It seemed like some presentiment of ill when I had that strange vision without any reason."

"Instead of that, my Eleanor, a forerunner of the joy of a lifetime."

The horse, their enforced companion, gave a neigh of impatience and their attention was called to him. He had followed them to the sheltered side of the old mill.

"He must have saved himself from drowning," said Clarence. "I saw him on the old bridge, riderless, among the people, and the next thing he was near me on the bank as dripping wet as I was myself. He must have struggled up the bank and then he came to me like a collie. I was just about to mount him and ride away, after I had gained breath enough, but I fell back again too weak to stand. We'll call him Hector; he shall be our gift from the gods."

"Oh, Clarence," she asked anxiously, "would you have gone without ever telling me?"

"No, dearest, a plan was forming in my mind to go and kidnap you in your sleep and carry you away with me."

"Sleep?" she said with ironic laughter, "and my house blown down or shaken down to the ground?"

"Really? and you not hurt?"

"Not a hair of my head. See, I am without a bruise. It was the strangest thing. One half of the house was never touched. It just parted in the middle and left the stairs leading from my brother's room intact. Oh, you never saw such a

ruin. I had been out at a reception in the evening. Delia had disappeared, and I had never had an opportunity to change my clothing. This white dress is a sight to behold, but never mind, *Clarence is saved!* He is saved! He is by my side!"

"The explosion occurred so near that it all but sent me into eternity. I have neither home nor habitation, nor friends to mourn me."

"Then there is no reason in the world why you should not come with me," he said eagerly. "We can live like the peasants, no care for the morrow nor care for public opinion, no care for what the world might say. If we had friends to mourn us, it might be different, but neither of us have any worth considering. Tell me, love, that you will come!"

"But where?"

"Anywhere. But, my dear"—he added reassuringly, "we could send for your pastor,—"

"Don't speak of it or think of it just now," she broke in; "you are too weak to plan things. Let me plan."

She saw the effect of chill and exposure was telling on him. His lips were blue. The walk of a few rods had been too much for him. "You shall not be permitted to have a chill. Oh, if I only had a few matches," she said irrelevantly. He found that he had a few safe from the dampness, for they had been in a metal pocket match-safe, and these she hailed with joy.

"We will make nature our physician, Clarence,

since you will not let me go to find one," she said cheerily. She found a few dried leaves and chips under the lea of the fence, and built a furtive blaze on some shale and slate stones lying about. It was less than a minute before the thin shale was heated through, and by the aid of her handkerchief she gathered the heated slate, which, affected by the heat, broke off in thin layers; and these she brought to him and applied them to chest, shoulders and heart. As quickly as they cooled, she replaced them by freshly heated pieces until, with clever skill, she had driven the chills and faintness entirely away. The glow of life came back. He smiled a gratified acknowledgment of her tenderness and skill. He drew her deft fingers to his lips.

"Eleanor, I have never in my life known such ministrations. I believe if you had not been here I should have died. I might have died of the joy of seeing you, but without you this chilled heart would not have been persuaded to beat. Now I am all right, dearest, and oh, so warm and comfortable. I am even sleepy, yet how could I sleep just now?"

"You need sleep," she answered. "It is nature curing your exhaustion. Had you not been a very sick man, sick in mind and body, you would never have thought of such an end as suicide."

Their minds were constantly reverting to the catastrophic events of the previous night.

She went on with her story. "I was terrified

out of my senses, just after I got home from the reception, by the plaster falling all around me, and then suddenly the house just seemed to part in the middle and I could see the sky, or rather the clouds, for rain fell in torrents, lightning flashed, thunders rolled and all the house rocking and trembling as if the solid earth were about to give way beneath our feet and then fires burst out in several places at once, and a cry "The bridge! The bridge! Seven people have been drowned. Clarence Bartruff is one of the number!"

"It was then that I rushed down to the river bank hoping to find some trace of you, only to learn, to my horror, that they had seen you swept away with others, and that there was no help for any of those who had fallen from the collapse of the bridge. I saw a poor mother find a portion of her boy's coat caught on a projecting limb and her cries could have been heard above all the noise of the waters, but still I hurried on with one purpose in mind, to find you — if dead, my place would have been beside you, for I knew that you cared, Clarence, and it seemed as if the world existed only for us two, living or dying we must be together. I had divined your love, that it had always been for me, for you could not hide it from me. All night long it seemed, I had been searching for you."

Tears were streaming from her eyes as they sat there, hand clasped in hand, still toned up or down

to the emotional in both their natures, and yet feeling the supreme gladness of companionship and joy of returning young vitality swelling in their veins. How strange that a bright sun-glow had darted into the cobwebby darkness of their stopping-place. It was not half so bright as the glow that irradiated their glad hearts.

"What were your thoughts, dear, in that dreadful hour?" she asked.

"The horror of what had preceded, that I had so nearly taken my own life! I think a portion of the bridge struck my head and partly stupefied me. Then the mad effort to save some who were crying for help, for I thought I could swim ashore, but they were being swept under by the dreadful force of the rushing and swirling water and at last the desperate effort to catch an overhanging branch and save myself overpowered the other effort. I had time to think of many things afterward, while I lay panting on the bank — of you, Eleanor — how I would go back and find you, and how I would beg and plead with you to come with me, to fly to some spot of God's earth where there were no false estimates of people according to their power of money-getting, but where we might live as we pleased, happily in ourselves, without the fear of a penniless future."

"Oh, but you know, foolish boy, what is mine is thine. You saved it for me, or at least for Walter. To tell the truth, I had to do a little desper-

ate planning to engage my lawyer, hoping he would be in love with me enough to understand."

"Oh, what a dumb idiot you must have thought me!"

CHAPTER IV

There was really no further danger of any deathly faintness, and now she had a plan of leaving him for a few moments, for she wished to forage for him. He ought to have wine, if wine was to be bought, and he ought to have food. She started hastily, intending to go back to the city. She promised most faithfully at once to return, but he would not let her go yet. They heard voices in the distance, but no one came near their abode. It was as if the winds had borne a minor strain to their ears, the minor of loss and suffering, to be resolved, when it reached their inner consciousness, to a strain of the most perfect harmony.

"Since you are so determined not to go back, nor to let me go and bring you food or help, I must take a novel plan for your refreshment and my own."

"To search the groves of Arcady for the fabled cattle of ancient story to sustain the life of mortals?"

"No; nor any such classical myth, but, on the contrary, to ask Ceres to give of her golden bounties, all lying ready to our hand, and not in the

least mythical. Can you see that field of corn, all tasseled and waving its flag of welcome? ”

“ Yes, to be sure, and beside it a big potato patch.”

“ I’ll tell you a secret. That is our own field.”

“ Yours, you mean? ”

“ What’s mine is thine. It’s high time you should comprehend that. But to tell the truth, it is a field cultivated by Malcolm, our Scotch gardener, for his own benefit —”

“ At your expense? That’s like you.”

“ What else could I do with it? But that field will serve us a good turn to-day.”

“ No! you cannot come with me,” she said authoritatively. “ You shall rest here until I bring you a meal all prepared, and something more beside for that poor horse. See how hungry he looks.”

She was away without more parley. A half hour later she was back again, and with something all steaming wrapped in the broad leaves of the burdock. She had roasted a dozen ears of Indian corn, and with it was brought an aroma which might have “ tempted the dying anchorite to eat.” In another leafy package were white-coated potatoes, dry, mealy and inviting. Eleanor’s deft hands had prepared the meal, having kept alive the embers in the fire of chips and charcoal on the further side of the mill by a few supplies from time to time, fearing some return of the chills. But there was now a healthy man’s appetite to assuage, and her own as well. Both of them eating in the prim-

itive way in which this food tasted best. She had permitted Clarence first to walk with her very slowly to the fern-bordered spring, very carefully, she insisted, not to stand long on the weak limb. They drank of its healing waters, and also looked into the glassy surface of the near-by pool, and ultimately removed some of the stains of the wound from his face. Laughing with the recollection of his first glance into that glassy surface, and drinking again from the tin dipper which hung by the spring, full, free, satisfying draughts of the liquid, feeling stronger with each step they had taken, and pleased with every new experience.

As the afternoon sun wore towards the setting, and the remnant of their feast was disposed of, they talked again of their future.

"Why are you so unwilling to go back to the city, dear?" she asked gently.

An expression crossed his face which revealed to her the fact that this mortal antipathy had in it something that nature herself must heal.

"I would answer you if I could, Eleanor, but it is simply this, that in that place I have suffered the tortures of the damned!"

"Enough said, you shall not go."

"Thank you for saying that."

"You shall never go back until you are perfectly well both in mind and body and, Clarence, I'll stay with you. We're both dead, you know!"

"While I would love to have you," he said, in appreciative and happy rejoinder, "I must not let

a supreme selfishness on my part persuade you to do anything which might hardly be understood in your social world. You are the Queen among them, dearest, but possibly we may think of some plan —”

“I’ve thought of it,” she said happily. “You stay here safe and sheltered, and let the winds sing you to sleep. You may not want to stay a second night! I’ll go back about sunset, across lots, to the old place. I must see how things look there, and besides, I want to see if my little cat is alive. If she is, I shall firmly and gently throw her through the garden gate, into the Mayor’s grounds, with my blessing, knowing that she’ll be well taken care of, then see if I can get into Walter’s room, get a few of his things, stay there to-night if it isn’t too spooky, and if it is, go myself to the Mayor’s, and come back to you in the morning. Then, if you promise to be good and not run off to the great wood, inveigled by some wood-nymph, I’ll get you another meal of sweet corn like the one we ate this morning, before we go on our way to the next station.”

Her willing sacrifices for him were far too deeply felt for the mere commonplace words of gratitude. She read all he would wish to say in his now handsome and transfigured face. The red scar was now partially hidden by the cap — a gray visored cap which had, strangely enough, stuck to him.

She tripped lightly about the place, deftly arranging the make-believe pillows under his head

with a gentle command. As the cumulous clouds that still floated in the wake of the storm brought a chill air into their whilom abode, she brought a few more pieces of the warm shale and placed them carefully over chest, heart and lungs, placed the dipper of spring water at his side, and stooped to kiss the scarred forehead before she said good-by. "Before you hear the birds sing to-morrow morning, I'll be back."

Obediently he followed her counsel, giving minute instruction on his own part, for her safety.

"I would not, for the world, have you go into that shell alone, Eleanor. Get Delia —"

"Get the King of the Cannibal Islands! How little you know her, Clarence, and how little you know me! But I'll promise you to go to the friends in the next house, if you feel better about it, and by another day you may feel strong enough to go back. You will never need to worry again about one subject at least, for you see I am willing to go to the very ends of the earth and would be almost sorry to be 'alive' again if we have to go back to conventions."

He disobeyed her injunctions enough to lift himself on one elbow, and glance after her. There were the muddy little white shoes, the despoiled white dress, the trim form and ankle as she tried to escape the rain-soaked pools. He thought what she had braved for him and tears streamed down his cheeks, in his emotional feeling, but they were happy tears, and what a blissful thought of the

future it was which now made them sacred! And oh, the glimpse of green fields, from the open door of his abode, the glimpse of crimson and gold of the horizon, marking the setting sun, but above all this rapturous vision was the thought that there was no dread now of the morning. He might be a briefless lawyer, and a penniless lover, and no one to care or know in this blessed retreat, which would soon be changed for the forest spaces, and the great world before him for his grasping whenever that angel girl was willing to cast in her lot with him. He had asked her if she would be willing to be married, now, here, to one raised from the dead, like himself, but she refused absolutely.

But none the less he must guard her precious life as carefully as if she were the Queen, and he thought he had a plan that she would approve. He fell asleep while developing it in his mind.

And what of Eleanor in her rapid journey across meadows that she knew, where as a child she had picked the wild strawberry and listened to the carol of the birds? In the excitement of the night of tragedy, and the dawn of that day of a happiness beyond belief, she had neither rested nor slept, and hardly taken into her mind any consciousness of the havoc which had been wrought, beyond that of her own loss of the ancestral home. Now, reaching it just as the twilight shadows began to fall, she stood aghast at the ruin that had been wrought.

Moved beyond expression she found her way by

climbing over the débris of fallen timbers and brick and stone to a vine-covered arbor near the foot of the garden, and rested there, utterly weary, as the coming darkness began to fold the ruin from her sight.

One side, only, of the old house still stood — the side where Walter's room had been — but to go through the effort of reaching it seemed more than her tired limbs and weary brain could attempt.

Here on the arbor seat was an old rain-deluged book which she had left, and under the projecting beam lay a pile of cushions perfectly dry. One of these she thrust under her aching shoulders, and while doing so a series of quick, pathetic little cries announced that her kitten had found her, and in its own affectionate way was telling her about the trouble. Nestling in her arms, the little creature's happiness of reunion was pathetic and soothing. Eleanor's head sank back among the vines merely to rest a moment, as she thought, but when she awoke the night had fled; the East held the glow of the morning.

The light of dawn called her attention to the storm-worn dress and shoes, and with this fact the knowledge that without revealing herself to some of the people in the stores and streets, she would have no change. But these garments were impossible. Clambering over the rough places, she sought that room of Walter's which the storm seemed to have left intact.

Not a vestige here of anything to serve her pur-

pose. On the hook behind the door, however, she found Walter's discarded school suit, brown and slightly worn, brown shoes and stockings and a small military cap. It was but the work of a few moments to lay aside her white dress and belongings. Rolling them together in a slight package to take along with her, she felt the glow of a new courage leap through her veins.

She was *petite*, and the fourteen-year-old boy's suit fitted her. She returned to the summer house which had sheltered her for the night, and pausing for a few minutes in sad and thoughtful reverery, she asked the question so often asked of fate — "What, after all, is the meaning of our mission to this world? Twenty-four hours ago, or is it forty-eight? I was merely the careless, rollicking girl of society, fond of any kind of a lark; — now, how different. Almost as sure then as now that Clarence loved me, laughing in my sleeve at his backwardness about revealing his state of mind, but resolved that, as he needed money and influence to establish himself, he should have both, — and myself into the bargain; but the poor boy was ill and unnerved, or he would never have thought of that terrible deed of suicide! Now he seems to have a mortal antipathy to this city and a horror of coming back, and here am I, homeless, practically, but with acres upon acres of farm land, a block of city houses, no one except Walter to share the property with me. What is life meant for in my case, except to try to restore

health and sane happiness to this man? If I can do this great work even by humoring him in his mood of self-detraction, and building him up in his weak condition,—that is what God means me to do. Have I not saved his life? Why should I not share that life and watch its gradual return to the normal in his own way? His own way is a desire for the woods and fields — a farmer's love for the open, and, for a time at least, a total casting aside of books — of all study except that of nature in her own haunts."

Even to Eleanor herself the idea seemed fascinating. What might it not mean to him?

Walking about the well laid-out garden, untouched in this spot by the war of the elements, hands thrust in the pockets of the school suit, boy-like, in one of them she came unexpectedly upon a bit of metal — it was a key with card and name attached. "Echo-Bank!" The name of the house in the country! Here is a good omen. This is the key to our little house! The house that Mother bought for Walter and me before he went abroad to study. This shall be our destination, if Clarence agrees to it, and I'm sure he will, but just now he is too weak and unnerved to think of anything that means decision of purpose.

Her reverie was interrupted by a voice which she recognized as that of her faithful gardener. She had found a wicker basket in which she had placed her small package, her only girl's suit of wearing apparel, and she was about to fill the

basket with the luscious harvest apples which lay on the ground under the tree, shaken down by the high wind in great abundance. She was thinking how much Clarence would enjoy them.

"Hey, there!" said the voice, authoritatively. Looking back, she soon saw that Malcolm did not recognize her in her change of costume.

"Tak' a few, my laddie, but dinna tread on them nor waste them."

"These are for a sick man," she called back involuntarily, surprised that the gardener did not know her, as she had not tried to conceal her features.

"Well, 'gin he's verra ill, he'll be no likely to mak' way wi' half a bushel."

She smiled inwardly at his care of her property, and his Scotch thrift, albeit he was talkative enough to impart some information.

"Aweel, aweel, tak' what ye like, laddie. It's a great temptation to see them on the groond and naebody to claim them. It's been a fearsome nicht," he continued, "and seven people drooned i' the river!"

"Oh, oh, oh!" she exclaimed, shuddering.

"And this hoose broken to bits wi' the dynamite in the alley way; but the young lady hersel' was awa' wi' the Mayor's people and her maid wi' her, by gude luck.

"Noo, laddie, gang awa' wi' yer basket to the sick friend, but tell her it's no public property

here, and she had better not send you for any more."

With a smile, Eleanor picked up her basket and started for the outer gate, but the little cat followed her. She knew the identity of her mistress, even if the gardener did not.

"The cat belongs to my young lady, laddie, ye must na' entice her away."

But without trusting herself to answer, Eleanor went through the small gate and left the little creature in the Mayor's garden, speeding now with swift foot towards the old mill.

CHAPTER V

Not a soul that she knew did Eleanor encounter on her way that bright morning — and no wonder, in her boy's garb.

When she reached the mill again she found that Clarence had left the mill entrance. It was with difficulty that she restrained a cry of fear. Life has such a slight hold on this mortal frame of ours. On tiptoe she looked about their strange whilom abode — they had only been in an outer entrance-way; the machinery room was locked. She looked out of what had once been a window; saw the patient horse reaching his head over a paling trying to get hold of a few straggling clover tops for his morning meal. She saw a way that she could reach them from the low window and did so, throwing the clover over the paling. Then, taking a few of the apples from the basket, breaking them open from the stem side, as the school-boys did, she fed them to him out of hand. In the distance she thought she saw Clarence, and felt a glow of hope in his returning vitality.

But the horse demanded her attention. And now she noticed that the bridle was still on. Had it never been removed, or had someone been there during her absence? Or had Clarence himself

been the rider? The darkness of the former morning might have made her overlook the bridle. Obeying a sudden impulse, she mounted to his back from the vantage ground of a projecting timber and swept him away towards the outlying farm, with all the skill of the practiced horsewoman that she was, and later came back with her arms laden.

She now saw Clarence, making his way very slowly and with halting lameness towards the opening among the trees by which he might naturally expect her. It was still early. In her own little arbor retreat, with the kitten in her arms, at home, she had waked with the birds, surprised to find that weariness had overpowered her the night before, but Nature had performed the cure, and losing no time in her swift return, she was ready for the office of either trained nurse or general helper.

He had been up probably as early as the dawn himself, and it was he, no doubt, who had arranged the bridle and had tested his new strength by trying the mettle of the horse, but he could not have gone far, and the effort had made him throw himself down under the tree by the spring on his return, with pure but healthful weariness.

But now, what a change for the better! He was still eagerly glancing towards the way she might be supposed to come, an anxious look on his face, but in appearance he was stalwart yet slender, gentlemanly even in his battered clothes,

so wrinkled and crushed now, bearing some of the marks of his battle with the flood. She did not wish him to see her in this suit of her brother's, until she had had a little time to explain, so she busied herself arranging the basket of harvest apples, red-cheeked and mellow, within a border of fresh green fern leaves, and placing them with a cup of the sparkling spring water on her improvised table, all was ready. Then she looked with loving concern through the window at his white face, white except where the crimson stain of the injury had marred his handsome and aristocratic contour of feature. She would have liked a mirror to see the strangeness of her own costume, but trusted to his comprehension.

The old window was covered with cobwebs, and yet she could see him plainly, walking, walking slowly, trying his new-found strength, it seemed so strange to see him walking with a limp, always looking through the opening among the trees through which she might be likely to appear. She felt grateful, too, that he had been so careful of her own best interests.

"He was so determined not to go back to the city himself," she mused, "yet would have refused to let me stay with him. So anxious, too, that I should, on no account, stay alone in the portion of the old home that stood upright. The dear! Twenty times more afraid of 'Mrs. Grundy' for my sake, than I am for myself. They all know me for a wilful little outlaw, but a prude as well;

but not one of them knows his beautiful nature so well as I do. I have done just as he wanted me to,—I didn't stay in the old house, though, nor go to any friends; but fell asleep with the kitten on my neck, and never knew it till daylight. Now, how shall I make my peace with him about these boy's clothes? How Walter used to laugh at me about my sentiment about the suit; but now it is serving me; and to think that the elements saved these! Now if I could only find a pair of scissors, but this will do" (pushing her fair hair in a knot under her cap) "who could know me now? I believe that even Clarence may have to look twice."

The pathetic weakness of Clarence had been his ally. Had he been less weak, the mother principle might not have been so strongly aroused in her nature. She went nearer the window and looked fondly out into his eloquent face, through the battered glass of the old window, quick tears coming to her eyes. "'Whither thou goest I will go.' No evil shall come near me. I can trust myself with you, my beloved!" But lest anyone should see them she would keep on this boy's suit. He wished to begin life anew, and he should have his way. She was brave to do and to dare for him. A quick panoramic vision of baffled success, of envies that thwarted, of losing ventures passed before her mind, and again she thought how hard had been the struggle which had led him to the very brink of suicide. She would rather live

like the peasants or together they might become children of the wood.

Something rattled in the pockets of the suit, and in hopes of finding loose change she waited to examine them. There was nothing of the kind she sought, but there was the blessed key. She had really forgotten the first glad surprise. "The key of his 'hut' in the woods." She remembered how Walter had sought both high and low for this key, for he had promised the use of his Adirondack cottage to a boy friend to use on his hunting expedition during the term of months or years in which he expected to be in Germany under the tutelage of an uncle, and finally had sailed away without making the expected offer of the cottage in the woods.

A feeling almost of startled belief in the hand of destiny made her look with strange affection on this small piece of metal. Later, she found a gold dollar. Here was the habitation prepared. "Thou hast set a table before me in the presence of mine enemies!" was her pious exclamation. Through all the seething images of her brain these thoughts presented themselves as she waited for Clarence to come in. Not once did she doubt her lover's sincerity of purpose, or his power to protect her in her own purity and uprightness. She was brave, she was true.

"There, at last he has turned to come in and doesn't know that I am here."

He came in slowly and looked around. His eye

was caught by the rough box-formed table, with its rosy-cheeked apples in their bed of fern leaves, and his countenance brightened, for he knew that she had come. A delicate-looking boy in knickerbockers stood before him. He seemed startled, came nearer and looked again. Then the crimson flashed into his face, outlining the wound with painful distinctness.

She looked up into his face, with her own smile of reassuring confidence. He did not answer the smile. He looked profoundly displeased. She brought the dainty basket with its treasure and placed it before him. He turned away from it, much to her regret, for she was consumed with hunger herself, and knew that he must be starving.

After a while he walked slowly back and forth, seeming in deep thought.

"Eleanor, Eleanor! Have I tempted you to do anything like this? You might better have let me die on the bank. Possibly by my own dislike to going back I have led you to this absurd step. I must go away, but you must let me go alone. I'll come back after Nature has healed me in mind and body."

"Clarence, you are not going back to the city, nor am I. I shall go on to the little cottage in the northern country. It is not more than twenty-five miles from here, and need hardly be more than a day's journey. If you are strong enough to take the journey with me and wish to go there,

I shall be glad of company on the journey. If not, if your strength is not equal to it, I'll stay with you until it is. And let me say to you at this point, Clarence, that this change of costume was made from necessity, not from choice, and not with any thought of your approval or disapproval."

The flashing eye warned him of the fact that she knew how to hold her own, and that remonstrance was needless, and with the thought came a great wave of surging happiness.

"Eleanor, you saved my life. Do with me what you will!"

She had been prepared for this. It was in her wise little plan and she knew just how to meet his changed mood. She had paid no attention whatever to his severe frown, but said with decision:

"Did you think for one moment, Clarence, that we could spend the day, possibly the night somewhere, and possibly several days and nights, without being discovered? As we are now, no one will question. To all inquiries we will say we are victims of the flood. We have no home; nor any money to pay for a night's lodging. (Our friends will all think we are at the bottom of the river, and they will have enough to do looking after their own losses.) We will stay here to-day, unless someone drives us away. You will grow faint again, dear, if you don't eat. I have something for you." She had brought the basket of apples; she had been roasting the ears of corn on the hot

shale while he was watching for her, and now they were ready. She made such a pretty boy, such an arch, engaging face under her boyish cap, which, of course, she could not remove at the risk of her hair falling about her ears, that soon he saw not only the wisdom of her scheme, but also a glimmering hope that she might after all be willing to cast in her lot with him for better or for worse, for life — for life! could it be possible?

But right here he must guard her precious self from all malicious tongues. "Forgive me, Eleanor, I could not all in a moment be willing to see that you had changed your sex, you are such a womanly woman, but at the same time, a very handsome, boyish boy."

She had now placed before him the apples in a basket bordered with fern leaves, and saw the look of delight in his face. Very tempting they looked in the half-starved condition of both. The roasted corn was all they could desire. "But how did you do it, dear? How under the canopy of heaven did you roast this corn? And how did you get it so early?"

"You know I heated the shale? There was fire enough left under the sand of the one I made almost at daylight, then when I came back and found you away, I roasted both the corn and the potatoes in their jackets."

"Where did you find such beauties?"

"Look! Over there back of the corn field. A whole field — our own, as I told you last night,

but you didn't even hear me; you were in elfland."

They found that there was even mirthfulness yet in store for them, as a simultaneous laugh burst from both their lips. Although they had seen several workmen pass, no one had seen them as yet in their retreat. Before an hour had passed, Clarence had admitted that her costume was the only one feasible under the circumstances.

As the afternoon sun went down on the second day after the catastrophe, and the novelty of their situation grew upon them, it was decided between them that they would take the horse which the gods provided, and take advantage of the early moonlight night to go on their journey, but, strange to say, Clarence, who was the enthusiast, suddenly became the objector. They might soon be on their way, but what of her? Absolutely indifferent about being discovered in their retreat, she had the courage of her convictions, and so does it often happen that circumstances beyond our human control decide the fate of individuals, as it sometimes has of whole nations. They seemed already to be committed to this scheme; but Eleanor insisted on going dressed as a boy, and with this view did not invite caresses or even words of endearment from his lips, which at first, in the excitement of their exaltation of mind, were merely the natural outcome of their happiness in each other — their recognition of the strange outcome of their fate, and the nervous tension and excitement of their night of catastrophe. It was

not without a sense of absolute longing for the very caresses she would not invite. But this he did not know.

"How strange that we have been here nearly all day, Clarence, and yet no one has been near the old mill. A few people have passed on the highway, but no one seems to have noticed the refugees."

"I can see the wisdom of your change of dress now, Eleanor."

"Nor-le-an, Norrie, if you like it better, and Clare for your name."

"Well, when we are with others, but you must let me have the name of my dream hours when we are alone, darling."

"Your dream hours? "

"I have called you by your name through the darkness often and often, Eleanor. Isn't it strange that it has taken the shock of dynamite and almost a drowning experience, to make me bold enough to tell you that you have been my only love in all the world, Eleanor, *My only one!* "

"And I could truthfully say the same of you, dear, only that just now, with these boy's clothes on, sitting by your side on a couch of meal bags, it seems a little absurd to dwell too much in retrospect, but not to let you forget that I am really a girl, and not just what at this moment I appear to be, I will dress sometimes in this absurd evening dress and appear in my own character. Just look at the flimsiness of it! I can crush it into a

mere handful." Suiting the action to the word, she gathered it together in a filmy bunch, then flung it out across the inner railing of their enclosure, for they were still in a sort of outer court.

The old flour mill had been for some time out of business, whether from lack of grain or water it would have been impossible to tell. But this fact had made it all the more a haven for these babes of the wood.

The articles of feminine apparel over the railing gave a sort of homelike appearance, and Clarence gave a hearty laugh of pure content to think that not only was he still in the world but of it, that he was accountable to no man, that he was able-bodied and able-brained, or would be when his bruised knee healed. He could make a living either with hands or head, and this dear "boy" at his side, this delightful "girl" Eleanor, who had cast in her lot with him, whose angel evening dress of lace or muslin — he didn't know which — hung back of them within his very touch, what could it all mean? But to go with him, unchaperoned, would mean much, too much, in her world. In her case it was out of the question. What she was giving up for him was more than position or money; of the latter, she had plenty, but not any of it available in the present emergency, and he was glad of that, truly glad.

"It pleases me so, Eleanor, that you are quite as determined to 'stay dead' for awhile, as I am myself, for you like the 'open' as much as I do;

but, dearest girl, listen to me. Delightful as it is to have you hour by hour with me, I could never have consented to your doing for my sake that which in the eyes of the world would be misunderstood."

"You are not going to send me back, are you, Clare?"

He saw two big tears steal below her eyelids. He kissed them away.

"I'll tell you my plan, and see if you approve: About a short driving distance from here, where the forest deepens, there lives a very grateful client of mine — Frederick Nolan. He would lay down his life for me, I believe. I saved him, by a law process, from losing his little home. He is married and they say his wife is a sensible, hard-working little woman. I would see, if you are willing, if they might find a place for you, while we are on our way, and you would then be sheltered from the storms or dews of night —"

"And not see you at all between daylight and dark?"

"During the day we could be much of the time together, roaming through the woods and fields; staying until we got tired of it, then coming back true hermits of the wood — to the minister's — you know, dear."

"Everything so commonplace, Clare? Still, I will do just as you say; except that I don't want to see either priest or bishop or notary, until we reach our little Echo-Bank cottage. I want to be

married *there*. Here is the key. We'll have that for our talisman and will go step by step towards the North, but in no hurry. Time is our servant, — Nature will be our physician, even our playmate. The world is ours for the taking, Clarence!"

He responded meekly: "You must have thought me a boor when I told you yesterday that I could not go back to the city. It would be different now that I could go for a certain definite purpose; you know what, Norrie."

"Well, I shall not let you, at least until you look less like a pugilist. You are wholly in my charge. I am your physician. You need the open air, the woods and the fields, and not to worry about anything, even about me, Clare. People have called me a 'dare-devil'—"

"Dare-angel, would be better," he said fondly.

"They have sometimes called me a dare-devil because I loved horses and dogs and all the dumb creatures who look up at you out of such patient eyes — and I have never seen a horse yet that I was afraid to ride; why, even our Hector has taken me on one trip this morning around the width of Malcolm's farm,—"

"Why, when?"

"Before you came back to me, my lord Clarence, in your luxurious abode. I came here just a little after sunrise, and found you away in the field or the forest."

"Did you? Then you saw me almost a well

man, cured by yourself. I had had that one enjoyable trip myself," he said. "Didn't you find the bridle in place?"

"Yes, to be sure, and thought that someone had been here earlier, and that they had found our retreat."

"I was really awakened by the birds," he said, "and had the very happiest waking moments that I have known for a year,— and hungry? I could have eaten that corn raw, but I wished to try my strength and so went to the pool beside the spring for my looking-glass; and to try the horse's mettle, I ran him down the road, looking for you, but that was the one straw too much, so that is why you found me resting in the shade, but returning from the spring not a bit the worse!"

CHAPTER VI

“ Really, I never would have thought that such filmy, lacy things as those were what constituted the dress of a lady in society, Eleanor,” he said, glancing humorously at the wardrobe of his princess, from the fine silk stockings as they hung beside the dress and skirts, to the little white slippers with which she had plowed the soft ground by the river’s side, looking for the dead body of her lover. The sight of them now cleansed by the morning dew, as she followed the direction of his glance, made her shudder with the remembrance of that night of agony. The day had worn on to afternoon.

After the unusual exercise of the morning, sleeping in the arbor seat, it was not strange that with her hand clasped in his and his arm around her on the improvised settee of meal bags, this second day, her eyes closed in the sleep of pure exhaustion. Darkness had not quite descended upon them, and although they might be seen by anyone passing on the higher road, he was now reckless in his new-found happiness and, reaching around with the arm which was not in commission, he removed the boy’s cap, oh, so gently that she did not know, and let that soft silken hair fall

about her shoulders, caressing it, kissing it, owning it, wondering how it happened that he had never before observed its wonderful fineness and vitality. The white dress and the embroidered skirts were still near enough for him to touch, as they hung behind them on the railing, and while he gazed down at her boy's garb, brown knee pants, brown stockings, and rather well-worn shoes, he wondered if her object in selecting these boyish things from her brother's wardrobe might not have been to make him forget the question of sex in their gypsy-like wanderings? But he had yet to hear more of the history of that night of horrors ending in such joy, and to see how some unseen and unknown force had seemed to have been persistently working for the happiness of both. He had scarcely understood how completely her house had been demolished, all except the corner room which had been her brother Walter's. The story of the collapsing of the house he certainly remembered had been imparted to him by her when they were waiting by the river bank, but it had hardly found lodgment at the time in his brain, when he was chilled almost to death, when her arms had warmed him to life, when the howling of the storm had been sounding still in his ears, and the distant cries of pain and the terror could reach him in distant but distinct utterance. How she had come by the whole suit he hardly knew, but he recalled her seemingly short absence, while he was having a most delightful sleep; also

recalled the moment of waking up ravenously hungry and a little faint, of wondering if Eleanor's presence had been a reality or a dream, of a shuddering sense of that terrible depression which had enveloped him all the day, all the week before, which came near to ending in a tragedy.

"Good God! How would it have been with me now? How could I ever have become so unnerved?"

With closed eyes, he registered a vow: "If I am in the world of men again, I shall try to know their trouble for the sake of helping them. It is so often just the need of a human friend and the effect of the lack of one in this selfish world, that leads to the suicide mania. For the time being it is the disordered mind, the utter inability to cope with the adverse tides of life, and if here and there one could say from the heart '*I am my brother's keeper*,' how many lives might be saved!"

He looked down at the dear sleeping boy at his side, gave once more with his free hand the caressing touch to her silken hair, kissed it gently,—how beautiful it was!—and vowed that so long as she trusted him—and she did so, he believed, implicitly—he would in every way deserve her trust. Not even by a single touch or caress should that sweet delicacy be wounded, which he knew by every delicate act of her nature she had held as her most sacred possession, and if it should prove to be in accordance with her wish to go back to the city, to feel again the grinding pain of com-

petition, without the means of coping with other competitors in the race, why, here was the highest of all compensations, the love of this child woman, who was more to him than the whole world beside. They would go back, go at once to the clergyman who lived in their street and satisfy her sweet conscience by the marriage rites. But, on the other hand, if she would not object to a half nomadic life for a few days, what a blessed thing it would be to feel free to remain "dead" as she said. To wander away together to that mountain forest, pitch their tent there, live on nuts and berries, real gypsies, become lost to the world of men. Oh, what would it be not to be met at every turn by some Medusa scorpion of envy and malicious misunderstanding of motives? How could anyone understand, unless they had felt it? He suddenly began to realize that his arm and shoulder were growing numb while he was holding a sort of dream conference with himself with that dear head so close to his own. He must kiss her just once. He must take this hostage from fate. He would not have been human otherwise. The kiss woke her, but except for a slight start of surprise that she had fallen asleep at all under the circumstances, she seemed fully to recognize the position she was in and had no fear nor foolish prudery.

"I thought I had only dropped asleep for a few moments, Clarence, but see the moon in the sky and — why, it must have been hours! Have you been asleep, too?"

"No, only indulging in happy waking dreams about you!"

"Oh, you poor boy! How your arm must ache! How late do you suppose it is?"

"Only eight. I heard the city clock strike just now, and counted the strokes through the stillness."

"And you never moved for fear of waking me?"

"I was too happy, dearest. Besides I knew that you had not only been a long time without sleep, but that you had walked back from here to get a chance to find food or water and then away back to this spot again where you would have found me trying my strength, had you come earlier, but I didn't get the least alarmed, for you had said you were coming back. You see, I trusted you!"

"Do you think you could walk now, Clarence?" she asked, a little irrelevantly.

For answer, he sprang up with the quickness of a practiced athlete, for his temporary paralysis had passed away after that rest and sleep of the previous day. His lameness was also less noticeable. He was well schooled in all physical training, and in physical appearance, except just now, his bruised head, he might have stood for the model of one of the gods of the ancients. The warmth of body and the blessed sleep had worked a miracle, and that wise, sweet encouragement of hers, not to give way to despondency.

"Suppose we take a little walk around our

habitation then, Clare, feed our horse, and go a little way toward the city. We might find his distracted owner."

"I am not sure that I wish to find his owner. He might be very serviceable to us, ourselves."

"Well, we will keep him until someone claims him, then, and the Fates give us the means to pay."

Her hand was within his arm, and they clambered over the rough boards which made the floor of the old mill. He could not reconcile himself to her boy's garb, but she was determined upon this disguise.

"But if anyone should come in our absence, those pretty cast-off garments might attract some little notice? You see, I cannot help feeling a little partial to the delicate, feminine apparel," he said, with a smile.

"Oh, surely, I had forgotten them entirely." She sprang back with a boy's agility, and gathering them up in her hands, had by a few deft touches, smoothed them out in a neat, small parcel, not large enough to attract any attention.

"I must have at least one change of clothing," she said lightly. Wherever we go these shall go too, for you could almost carry them in your pocket."

"And sometimes I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, your own self, once more? You are truly a handsome boy, Norrie, but you are not yourself. *Not quite.*"

"We will take a bit of a walk around here if

you like; and clip some grass for the horse and gather a little more of that sweet corn for our next meal, whenever we eat it. Didn't it taste delicious baked on the shale?"

"Food for the gods! Well, we are ready for another meal of it."

"And another meal of it is ready for you, Clare; and then, dear, after we are through eating it, I know of such a delightful spot — a little oasis of green in a grove, a natural grove, of aspen trees. Perhaps we could walk there. See, you can see the tops of the trees with their queer tremble of the leaf, just this side of *our* field of corn."

"You wouldn't vanish, would you, Norrie; and leave me to go back, and tell the people that I had lied to them? That I wasn't dead, but merely demented? You will stay with me forever?" he questioned, ruefully.

"Forever!" she said, with enthusiasm, "forever and a day."

How he revelled in her bright and willing acquiescence. He knew her innate purity of heart and her recognition of law and order. They would be married, of course, when the opportunity came, but meanwhile, he rejoiced that she loved him well enough to trust him implicitly and neither of them was accountable to either parents or guardians. They had known each other long, and both knew that there is an infinite distance between love and license. There could be no harm in a little separation from the world, when fate had thus cast them

together. It was not that unwholesome separation which means only evil, if they had been willing to let lower passions have the ascendancy, which they were not. As he looked down at her pretty, boyish garb, as they walked, he realized that she was very petite and charming. It seems that imagination has so much to do with one's impressions that merely to imagine a boy walking by his side, like a brother, almost forbade the closer intimacy of lovers. The kiss which had awakened her, still lingered in its essence on brow, cheek and lips, and in a deep quickening of the heart, but that really must not be the normal but the exceptional. Yes, she was wise in finding the boy's suit and acting the boy's part.

"But, dear, where did you make your lightning change from a girl to a boy?"

"At the old place. I climbed over sticks and stones to Walter's room very early this morning."

"When I woke up and could not find you, and saw this boy in your place, I could not, for a long time, believe my senses. Having your dear locks put up under the cap, too, so changed your whole appearance. I always thought, too, that your brother was older, but these are the clothes of a lad."

"You are right. To think that of all the things I lost in that old dismantled house, his room at the foot of the stairs had only been slightly damaged. Two years ago I had carefully put away this light little suit of clothes and that boy's cape, just be-

cause I couldn't bear to think of anyone else wearing them, and you see I just happened to think of the suit, in my rush back to the old place to get some nourishment for you. I snatched them up, and the shoes with them, that he used to wear, and as good luck would have it they will just do to tramp in. I could never have worn my own. I think it would be just lovely to stay in that forest you speak of for another day, don't you, Clarence?"

"Yes, and I naturally feel a desire to know if as many people were lost by the parting of the bridge as people said. Oh, it was terrible! And the shock of that explosion!—if it had lasted another moment, I should have died of fright. But we didn't either of us die after all," he said laughing. "Here we are, and together! Norrie, don't let us ever go back!" She clung to him, shuddering. He answered enthusiastically in a joyous affirmative.

"Let us become children of the wood. We will find some cave and live in it and let people think we were really lost in the river."

"Well, we will for a few days, anyway, Mrs. Nolan and the birds my chaperone. If no one comes to find us to-morrow, we will stay there in the forest, eat our meal of corn, potatoes and ripe tomatoes, and when the moon rises we will take our pony and ride away to the ends of the earth, or rather to Echo-bank cottage.

Some few ears of the luscious corn were now tied

up inside of the bundle which contained her change of clothing, and they were ready to go. He brought the horse to the open side of the mill, and she stood ready to mount with him. It was again bright moonlight.

"Eleanor, my darling, are you really willing to lose yourself from the world for me? Am I in my senses?"

"Help me up, Clarence, to the seat in front of you, on the horse, before people straggle down this way and before the excitement in the city quiets down."

He had leaped on the horse and taken her up in front of him, clasping her slight form with a whispered, "You shall never repent having trusted yourself to me. Now, towards the Nolan's woods, for there is where their home is, and his wife is to be your wood's chaperone, you know."

"Toward the north," she added her word; "for there is no bridge, you know." (Here too, her own little plan was being developed unknown to him.) "Keep to the deepest part of the woods, so that no one may meet us. We are two boys. I am a younger brother, not over strong. As I said before, my name is Norlean or Norrie; yours is Clare."

"I'll accept it," he said; "it's rather easy to carry around."

"Yes, we are children of one mother," she said smiling, and carrying out the conceit — some plausible story that would be believed.

"Thank God that we are not! Oh, blessed catastrophe that brought us together without the shilly-shallying that has kept us apart for a lifetime almost. Thank God for the mortal fear that I was dead, since it unbolted your proud lips to say that you loved me. How many years have I served for you, my Rachel! How many more might I have had to serve to satisfy the claims of the world which we have left. Are we in heaven, Eleanor? It seems to me we must be. We died in the night after the storm and flood, did we not, and at break of day we were, and are still, in Paradise!"

"The only thing that troubles me," said Eleanor, "is that we have left all my books — and, in fact, all my earthly possessions; but my little kitten is safe with the Mayor's children, for I left him in their garden."

For some reason he felt a world of sweet confidence in the very humane desire on her part to think of a home for her kitten.

CHAPTER VII

She was silent as they paced along through the deeper gloom of the wood.

"Do you think you will have no regrets, dear love, nor wish, as the years pass, that I had really been lost in the river?" he asked.

"Never, Clarence, never! Had it not been for you, Clare — well, I dare not go back to that. To me, you are the world. You are the whole of it. You are society. I was never happier. The very birds sang my song of rejoicing to-day, and yesterday, the winds whispered it, the flowers reflected it. Regret? Regrets? — no, not one!"

His arm encircled the delicate form in its boy's garb, and no one would have thought that these two held such a secret between them. They were now a few miles away from the city, and the country seemed deserted. He knew that wooded country well. As a boy, he had roamed its length and breadth. He knew where there was a spring flowing from a rock which they must find. They rode, or rather ambled along in talk or silence, as the mood pleased them. Clarence had no thought when they started of taking quite such a primitive course as to remain all night beneath the open sky, but had thought of his friend Nolan's as a

place where Eleanor might rest and pursue their course again in the morning, and during one silence, which lasted longer than the others, he looked down into his companion's face and found her beaming and contented. She had passed through so much the day before. How tired she was! He only moved enough to let her head rest more easily on his arm, and the horse jogged on. As for himself, he felt no sense of fatigue now, but buoyant hopefulness and sleepless happiness. The wood was dense here, and there was no sign of inn or woodsman's cottage and the tired beast stopped of his own accord near a spring trickling at the side of the road at the foot of a great oak and signified his intention of resting for the night. The cessation of motion made Eleanor look up.

"I was so tired, Clare," was all she said, and with a caress that meant thanks for his wonderfully patient holding over the rough roads, she sprang down, patting the horse's flanks, and speaking kindly words to him. Through the mottled moonlight which came through the trees, she could see Clarence's face, and that blessed smile she had learned to love.

"We will have to find a gnarled root for a back rest for you," he said, "and I shall run on ahead and find my friend, Nolan, and his wife,—then come back and stay here, when I have taken you on to them. Oh, I forgot my lame knee. They are too far in the open."

"The babes in the wood to be devoured by wild

beasts? No, I can tell you a plan, Clarence, which will be a great deal more comfortable for you. A chair such as we used to make when children. I saw, just now, a wild grape vine, and here is just the right kind of a low tree bole. Break off a stretch of the vine and wind it once or twice across those two limbs. There you will have a lovely reclining chair where any one could lie and look up to the stars." Merrily she continued. "In one step I can reach it. It is nothing more than my sedan chair." She suited the action to the word, and stepped lightly into her improvised chair, where leaning back, she looked as picturesque as a wood nymph in the moonlight. "Now, let me help find a place for you. You would have gone to find your friend, but he would have been superfluous. You insist upon sleeping under the trees, but you must be high out of the reach of bears and wolves, with just such a fantastic back rest."

He would not let her get down again, but folded the bundle for her head, and then, against her remonstrance, started out after all to find his friend. She fed the horse — they had availed themselves of the mill provender — speaking many petting words to him; listened to the weird night noises, and waited.

After awhile, Clarence came back and seated himself under one of the near-by trees. He had found all the family absent, but having made that effort of sacrifice to the conventions, he returned

to her in fine spirits, and leaning against a strong tree bole, closed his eyes. He heard nothing more until awakened by the singing of birds and the shimmering of the sun through the trees. A cheery voice said "Good morning!" He started up, and smiled in response to her glad greeting.

"Have you slept at all, Norrie?"

"Every moment. The birds waked me."

"I am so glad we didn't find the Nolans," he said, "for the morning is too beautiful to lose. You would have been shut up in their upper room and would have missed my bird concert. They have come back, though, for I hear his ax busy and the trees falling. I'll have to spare you at sundown, I suppose."

They breakfasted on the rest of the shale-cooked corn, and then wandered to where a rivulet flowed through the woods and drank from cups made of leaves. Yet they were glad to see that some traveler had left a cup beside the old spring. They gathered wild berries made luscious by the shade and drank in the fragrance of the piney wood. The ravages of the cyclone had been felt in the outskirts but in lesser degree and no sign of the shock of the explosion. All who were able bodied, had hastened to the scene of horror to render assistance or to satisfy curiosity. They, the travelers, came to a cabin which seemed to be deserted, but there were signs that it was inhabited and that its occupants had only left it for the day. This was Mr. Nolan's, the father of Clarence's friend, who with

his family lived here. He only had a small cultivated patch. In the garden were growing vegetables, among other things a heap of young potatoes, the fork left in the hill, fresh cucumbers and crimson tomatoes and also that already tested, toothsome delicacy, the sweet corn in its fittest state for the palate. Hunger had overtaken our travelers and dismounting and taking without leave (except the free masonry of country hospitality which always permits so much freedom as this) a few of these tempting edibles, they again wended their way towards their shady wood, removed from the main road. In an opening they allowed the horse to graze and building for themselves a small fire, they roasted the corn and potatoes, sliced the cucumbers with the penknife, ate the potatoes from their jackets, the tomatoes as if they were fruit, and felt that they were still in Paradise, but with very human appetites indeed. They laughed and chatted after this gypsy-like meal until the sun passed over the zenith and began on his descending way.

What responsibility had they? No one to hold them to account, not one in the great wide world who knew that they were in it. Some few acquaintances there might be who thought Clarence to be lying stark and white at the bottom of the river, and if any had missed Eleanor, it would be supposed she perished in the ruins of her prostrate house, and thus two individuals could sink in the turbid ocean of humanity and the sweeping waters

close over them and make no sign. Now, they even shrank from any word that would suggest ways and means of making a living; that was too much like the real world and they, were they not, out of it altogether, living in a higher altitude? How could they come down to mundane things? But a few drops of rain from a wing of passing cloud made them ponder. Clarence had found Mr. Nolan, the son, and made his arrangements for Eleanor's comfort. He had the few water-soaked bills in one of his pockets, Eleanor had but one piece of gold left in her purse, and this small sum was the extent of their present possessions, for the horse they could not call their own, even though Clarence had borrowed it for his needs, and would make amends when he could. Thus a number of days passed, too delightful to take note of them. No one had made any claim to the horse and no one had discovered in this young boy any semblance of the real identity.

The Nolans, both father and son, were typical woodsmen. The old man, his son and son's wife, and also two young children, lived and cultivated a second small farm where they had foraged for their first meal. On a second trip there, having been driven from their forest fastness by hunger, they were able for a few pence to buy some of the necessities of life. Both were animated by one desire, to be as upright in their seclusion as if they were among the haunts of men and felt that in order to carry their ideal love to its consummation

of marriage, they must find some place where there would be a few more marks of civilization, possibly some habitable houses, a schoolhouse, a church, and also a clergyman.

"We are as much married in the sight of God as if all the ministers in Christendom had said their prayers over us," said Clarence one day, "for we are not of the world, now, but children of the sun, but I suppose you would never be contented, Eleanor, without a marriage certificate and the minister's blessing. And, to tell the truth, I think of myself as a selfish cub to have permitted you such a sacrifice for me, and only wish I had a plan by which we could do it, without giving ourselves away, that we that were dead are alive again."

"The next time I go to Grandfather Nolan's (that is the house of the old man, the father of Nolan, and his wife, who had the little garden), I will find out something about the 'lay of the land,' as they call it, and it is just possible that they may know of someone, either lawyer or minister."

"But we would have to get a license, and look at me — a boy! How could we explain?"

"Sure enough! I must try to earn a little money in some way, dearest, so that we can pay the minister we find to marry us, and also find food and shelter. Our gypsy life is grand, but neither of us is cut out for the nomadic for a life-time. We must get clean clothing and garments that are suitable. These of mine have been in the flood and fire."

They had no reading matter, and they were both bookworms when in their normal condition, so that they naturally missed their pastime of reading. Clarence was a fine reader. She had heard him a few times in public, and felt such a glow of pride in his ability, that she loved to encourage him in it, and it was a matter of real joy to them both to find that there were some scraps of newspaper poems among the few water-soaked papers which had been in his pockets on the night of the disaster, these, by dint of spreading out, of unrolling carefully, they were able to decipher. Nearly all of them were poems; but, after reading one or two, they were eager for more. One turned out to be a rather familiar sonnet, which they knew without the name, but the other they could not place, and yet they thought it worthy. A portion of it had been torn off, but it was familiar. They tried to guess the author, but were too happy to make anything of it but a pastime.

TO SLEEP

"A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water and pure sky —
I've thought of all by turns; and yet do lie
Sleepless; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees,
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more I lay
And could not win thee, Sleep, by any stealth;

So do not let me wear to-night away,—
Without thee, what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health."

"Of course, it is by the prince of songsters, Wordsworth," said Clarence. "I recall the time when I had that experience of not sleeping, when at college. I was studying with might and main, and had brain fag, I think. The nights failed to bring me sleep, or the days peace. I used then to steal out and sleep under the open sky. I do believe that it is an obsession. But just think how much we may now enjoy reading. How I have missed such companionship!"

After all, this was the only one they could thoroughly decipher. The other had been water-soaked. It was, perhaps, a caustic comment on the multiplicity of books that our friends found this supreme delight in the few, fugitive bits of verse in their possession, some of them half obliterated. That they had studied them until the words became impressed on their memory and that they resolved when they once more should reach the haunts of civilization, they would read more, was self-evident. In their inner consciousness they had never really meant to become hermits forever.

To Clarence, growing sunburned, and carelessly happy by the invigorative air and exercise, there were no regrets, nor had he wearied in the least of being a nomad. He had selected a site for a cabin,

and had, by dint of borrowing a few tools from Nolan's woodshed, busied himself in getting out moderate sized tree boles with their natural bark left intact, to build a log hut. He had rather failed to get Eleanor deeply interested in this scheme: it seemed like too hard work for him. She preferred his fishing trips, for from these he came back refreshed and proud of even a small "catch," and together they would broil them for a hearty wood's meal, both having found the wood-lover's appetite in those care-free, sylvan shades.

He had begged from the Nolan children their fish rods, also a box snare for wild creatures, but the only thing that was caught, a gray squirrel, Eleanor had set at liberty with her blessing. At first it was a source of delight to Eleanor to go down to the bank of the rivulet which flowed through their corner of the wood, and, seated among the clumps of aspens, with their low, overhanging branches, think of it as her improvised boudoir, where she could take a refreshing dip in the limpid stream, and in its still depths see her own beautiful face, arranging her fair, clustering curls in this nature's looking-glass, and enjoying the delightful aroma of the morning hours.

Clarence had been supremely happy in this nomadic life, and without much thought of the future while he was fishing or hunting, the week's happy hours drifted on. He wondered at her rosy cheeks, and the day before he had noticed the rings of short, silken hair as they curled over her head

like a boy's; all lying in circlets and wavelets over her fresh young brow, but it gave him a new admiration of its fineness and vitality.

"You were such a naughty child, to cut off the long braids," he had said, in real deprecation of their loss, and when she recalled her rebellion, how with the aid of the rusty little pocket scissors she had severed them one by one, in order to be still more like the boy whom she impersonated, she even laughed aloud at the remembrance of his surprised dismay. It was something now to be merry about.

"I think I could live here always," said Clarence. "It is our third day of the woods, and the days are forty hours long here, and yet too short after all. There is something so delightful in feeling as free as the birds of the air, no one to find fault or to ask us how we meant to get our living."

She gladly assented. "Why, Clare, I have come to know the songs of all the birds; — I could set them to music."

"Do you remember that first day here, Norrie, when you jumped out of your improvised grapevine hammock, when we fortunately couldn't find the Nolans at home, and you came with me to bathe your pretty face in the mountain pool?"

"Yes, and my dismay when you discovered in this place more than the pool at the mill — your own scarred forehead? Yes, indeed, I do remember every incident of that day. The light shining

through the leaves and shimmering on the lake, and do you remember the cup you made for me to drink from at the spring, a large leaf of the dogwood tree? Oh, it is all delightful and yet, and yet — there are, sometimes, longings."

"For the world, little one?"

"I hardly know."

"Well, some day soon, but meanwhile, we must mark this spring trickling down through the mountain, for we might wish some day to come back, and really, I must get my house finished — the roof must go on to-day."

Delightfully as the hours passed, there were many times when Eleanor felt that this nomadic life might have been satisfactory so long as people had never learned the benefits of a state of extreme civilization, but for those who had experienced its benefits, there was much that was lacking, and except that her watchful eyes had discovered that the fresh air, sunshine and freedom from worry had brought perfect health to Clarence, she would have suggested either to struggle on until they had reached her brother's camp, or else to go back to their sadly chastened city, reveal themselves to the authorities, tell their story, and trust to the sympathetic interest of their fellow-townsmen. It really had, as yet, only been three whole days of the woods, and two of the mill, but so many incidents had been crowded into the period that it seemed to her like a small eternity, for the days were doubly long. The birds waked

them so early, the tree-toads kept up their nightly serenades, but withal, two happier people never existed, for Nature was doing for them more than all the doctors. It was one day when Clarence had tried a rather primitive way of securing some wild creature to use for food, and had succeeded beyond his expectations, but thought to add to his trophies by bringing some fish from the fork of the river which had so nearly engulfed him a few days before, that she developed her plan and was waiting to propose it. They had grown averse, in these few days of absolute freedom, to bind themselves again to the tyranny of times and seasons, and yet the necessities of existence were all-compelling. The desire to know if they had been missed grew so strong that Clarence, after developing as dainty a dinner from the proceeds of his morning's hunting as any epicure could desire, complied with Eleanor's wish to look matters squarely in the face and decide upon their course of action. While the romance of their situation had not in the least grown commonplace to their own minds, they had now gained time to think of how it might appear in the eyes of others. At a time when the throes and convulsions of Nature make all things plausible that the children of men may try to do, when artificiality is at a discount and genuineness of character at a premium, one might be led to play the most fantastic tricks before high heaven and be forgiven, but when the everyday grind comes again and people don their

critical spirit, there is so often an unexpected accounting necessary to the dear public; and probably it is well that it is so, in the higher interests of life.

She heard him, as he bounded away from her, come back presently, whistling, through the wood. For the time being he had forgotten the log hut.

"After all, you are such a dear boy, Norrie," said he, turning towards her in rough boy fashion, rumpling the moist curls over her head in riotous confusion with both hands. It was, in itself, a caress, but the caress of a boy for his comrade, rough and ready and rollicking. To her, there was lacking, now, something of the tenderness of the lover. She could laugh in the merry suggestion of pure comradeship while they were together in those wooded aisles, or when calling at the Nolans' for her, or while eating their improvised meal together, and when he was away hunting in the hope of finding something for a special meal, which, when found, he would, with the born hunter's avidity, prepare and roast over the coals in the improvised oven of his own planning, here she was the true comrade entering into his life with the relish of pure sympathetic interest, but it was the hours between times that she found oppressive, when she had time to think. At such times she would wait until he was not likely to come back at once, and then take out her white dress, her delicate silk stockings, her white shoes and delicate underclothing, and wonder if the time would ever

come when she could assume her own character, and if that might not awaken again something deeper than the apparently sane brotherly regard. It was just what she had desired at first, in their isolation, but not for all time. Oh, no, no!

"Do you know, Norrie," he went on talking joyously, the next afternoon, as if she had known intuitively his thought — "that I have been busy dragging out a few more logs from the underbrush this morning, to finish our log cabin? Yes: I have the plan all in my head!"

"How are you getting on with it? You ought to have called me to help."

"Well, I whistled for you once, for that top-most log. I couldn't, for the life of me, lift it up alone. When one end was in place, the other end was on the ground, with me under it —"

"But you aren't hurt?" her sympathies all aroused just as soon as the motherly instincts could be called into play.

"No, no; not in the least." His bright smile gleamed out, irradiating his handsome face. There could be no doubt now that Nature had placed her hand of healing upon him.

"I'll help you to-morrow, Clare," she said, answering his enthusiastic planning, "but of course after it is done we'll leave it in the Nolans' care for a while at least, and press on, for you know if we stay here, someone from the city will recognize us, and there are things that we really cannot explain,— no one could know how ill you were."

"There is nothing under God's heaven that I am ashamed of, and if they do say anything of your wood's life, I can be chivalric enough to stand by a lady."

She laughed merrily — "Yes! a lady, but not a little boy with knee pants and worn out shoes."

"And golden curling hair and cheeks like two pink roses," he said, pinching them in passing, with a brother's familiarity. "Really, Norrie, I have forgotten how you look as a girl. The other day I was so in hope that you would put on the white dress with all the 'fixings,' ribbons and things in that sacred bundle. I kept out of sight for a good half day when you had been wading in the little creek, and I knew you would fly away like a butterfly and hide if you heard my voice at your elbow. Your pink feet were the color of rose leaves as you dipped them in the water."

She did not reply. There was something of a serious side to this escapade now, if such it could be called, in its beneficent results.

"I want you to come over to the west side and see my plan for the log cabin, Norrie; you know Mr. Nolan loaned me his ax and hand-saw, and I have never worked so hard in my life before. But — you ought to see it. Seems to me you are rather indifferent about our house in the woods. Are you?"

"Not in the least. I heard you while I was making an improvised table for our imaginary writing desk, right here at the foot of our tree.

See, I have two shelves made out of bark, and I have been foraging, too. The Nolan children had a white paper wrapper that came around a package. See, I have it all made into lengths of the size of a book page, and I can write on it with a burnt stick; but yesterday I borrowed a lead pencil."

"That is great! and what's this? a book?"

"No, only a few folded papers made to look like one. But, really, I would love to write one. At college they used to call me the book worm. But now I'll leave this desk to take care of itself and will come with you to see what you've done."

This house in the woods did not, under the circumstances, appeal to her as a prospective home. It was wonderful what he had accomplished, and when she glanced at his face and saw the healthy sunburn, and at his figure, that of an athlete, she felt grateful for all that had been done. What a change from the limp, fainting form which she had found on the river bank that terrible morning.

"Now, Norrie, it may rain or blow or thunder or snow, we are protected. Of course, the roof isn't on yet, but will be before another day is over."

He seemed to have lost all suspicion of his fellows, not caring who might see him in this wooded pavilion, not so very far from the city, after all. He evidently expected high praise and appreciation of his handiwork.

"Now we will gather boughs of evergreen,—that will be your work, Norrie, for our home in

the woods. We are as sylvan as the real wood's creatures,—"

"And as wild," she interrupted him, for it flashed over her delicate womanly sense that her own wood's bower in the low, fine boled tree, with the back rest of the grapevine caressingly supporting her shoulders, was something that the nymphs of Arcady might have used for a couch, and the breath of the pine-laden air of night or the sun-kissed breezes of the summer morning with the birds singing at dawn, and her protector somewhere with his home-made fishing apparatus, was a very different proposition from the thought of the log hut, and that she must exercise all her ingenuity to get him to give up this enchanted life, and either go back, with all that step involved, or to go onward to the little country home, stopping first at the doors of some parish priest or minister and having a marriage ceremony performed.

"You don't enter into the spirit of it,— of the new house, Norrie," he said, looking at her searchingly.

"It is a perfect marvel to me, and how you have ever done so much alone I am at a loss to know."

CHAPTER VIII

Eleanor found that the key of their little cottage in the woods was still in her possession, and her first desire was to discover the nearest route to that place, and by slow degrees to wend their way thither. But here was a difficulty. To reach this place they must either go back the way they came, or make a detour of many miles, and in the meantime without money, what would they live on? How would the horse fare? They had grown attached to every twig of the dear tree which had first sheltered them, the weather had been perfect. There was no special hurry, but Clarence must try to get some news of the great world.

"I can see, now, how wise your plan was in wearing boy's clothing, Norrie. These simple people, the Nolans, as kind as the sunshine, see in us only two boy hunters, and we may be able from them to get supplies of one kind or another. Let me see, — I had a dollar or two in my pocket. Yes, five bills of the denomination of one. Only a couple, and yet what a simple life!"

"And I have a gold piece, see! It was one of our assets from Walter's cast-off suit. Of course I could never part with that. We must keep it till we are gray-headed."

She proudly exhibited her bright gold coin.

"And you know I have a small bank account, too, Clarence, but how could I get any of it without our revealing ourselves?"

"The bank account we don't want," he answered. "It would be an impossibility to get the money. This life is too entrancing. We cannot leave it just yet. I would like to beg, borrow or steal a few nails from the Nolans. I have their ax and their hammer, also their fishing-rod."

"Well, I can agree with you, but I do feel as if I should like a newspaper now and then, and a pencil and sheet of white paper."

"There is the pencil, at all events."

"Everything comes to our hand."

"Very likely the genial people over there might have a pad or a sheet of paper we could buy. Do you intend to write a book?"

"How absurd! but when you go off hunting and fishing I have time to do something to amuse myself. I would really like to write something if I could. Since you read those beautiful lines to me, I have been thinking of all the havoc of that explosion. My beautiful books!"

"It makes me feel a hunger for them," he answered, "an absolute hunger and thirst; so much so that one would be compelled to create, to write and think, and try to recall the gems which one has committed to memory. If you have a great library, why, there is not that hunger. You can go and eat and drink and live, but one will never, under any circumstances, create."

"You know you were speaking of that yesterday, Clare, in our hunger for news, and for the sight of a book. That makes me think, Clare, that while you were gone to-day, I wrote a little sonnet about the lake we visited yesterday, and I would like to have you hear it, if you will. Here it is; of course it is not just what we did see, you and I, on our walk to the lake, but there is only a small degree of poetic license after all, and I even had time to write a short prose description of the little house in the country — the home my mother bought for Walter and me — the one you know, of which I have the key."

"Which is to be the ultimate destination, I suppose."

"Yes, when you have had enough of the woods."

"Well, let's have the bit of poetry first."

Clarence looked a little bored, as if he could not expect much, but he listened with polite attention as she prefaced the poem, first giving to him the explanation of its conception.

"This is about that beautiful island which lies between lake and river," she said; "you can see a glimpse of the lake from here. I wanted to give the sound of the waters against the shore, and its feeling of repose." She went on, a slight tremble in her voice, she was so hopeful of his praise.

"The sound of waters fretting on the shore,
The hum of insect life, the droning bees,
A sound of whispering winds among the trees,
And dancing sunshine at the open door.

A woodland lake beneath its hills asleep;
Upon its crystal depths a boat at rest.
Two silent forms in eager, earnest quest,
Where speckled trout in gladsome pastime leap.
Blithe nature here presents her fairest face
Bright birds on every bough, all unafraid,
Sweet fern and trillium beneath the shade,
And sunlight flecking all the fragrant space.
But best of all, enhancing all the rest,
Dear friendship dwells apart, life's crown and
crest."

"Really, Norrie, did you do all that without any rhyming dictionary?"

Slightly insulted, but taking it as a pleasantry, she smiled back at him.

"Very good," he said, "but the technical part might be improved, and the sextet,—"

"Is all right, Clare, since no one will ever see it."

"We are getting almost too academic, I think, for mere woodsmen. What about the little story of the house in the north," he continued. "I am more interested in that place, for that, I suppose, is to be our ultimate destination. Are you going to read it to me?"

"Some time, Clare, but not now. It's more than half written with the burnt stick. I could hardly decipher it."

She was thrusting the poem back on the shelf of bark. That there might have been more than a shade of disappointment in the acceptance of the

poem, she could not have denied, but what poet ever yet attempted to read something just born, just breathing and sentient, but has felt that no other human being could exactly comprehend the travail of that birth. However, she wisely hid the feeling, thanking him and throwing the scrap of paper aside, she drew the other one from her improvised desk (which was a high-lying tree root with a slab of wood covering another gnarled root for her chair of state, and a niche in the lowest branch for pencil and pens, or in this case for the burnt stick-end and short pencil stub) but made no attempt to read it to him.

"I am deeply interested in the story of the cottage, for we want to know all we possibly can about that mythical place."

"Anything but mythical, Clarence, but the truth is that since Walter went away I have never cared to go."

"But you would like to go with me, wouldn't you?"

"That depends."

He glanced around at her, but was met by her bright, boyish smile, but also an expression which he did not quite comprehend, but it did not trouble him. It meant that she must do her "creating" like the Creator of worlds,—in silence, but with power to force them through space, and only claim credit for being their creator when they had flashed some challenge to the watchers of the literary firmament.

There was no one to goad them on by whip and spur, but without doubt they must soon hear something of the catastrophe and what had been said of the departed. Eleanor recalled that she had read, a few weeks ago, before the catastrophe, of a very large experimental farm somewhere in the county, one who had followed the example of Burbank, a Mr. Raines or Colin, she couldn't be sure which, had succeeded in getting wonders out of the soil. She had read of it indifferently, paying but little attention, in one of the weeks of her past existence; as that far-away state appeared to her now, but what would she not give now to know definitely just where it lay and what the prospect would be for a chance of employment either as helpers during the harvest, or a teacher of some of the mechanical arts, or some naïve correspondence about this new departure in agriculture to some of the city newspapers. Anything, anything to find themselves again naturally and happily among the world of men when the time came, not to-day nor to-morrow, but eventually; and then from this point they could let it be known that they were both alive and very much alive indeed, but working their own way and earning their own living; hale, hearty and happy; loving their old friends, and some day willing to come back, to come back together, to the old life with the benefit of new and richer experiences. This thought, on being talked over, appealed to them both.

“But don't let us be in too much of a hurry

about it, Norrie. It seems to me I should die a second death to be in the grind again, and I do want to finish my log hut. Why, it would take me a couple of weeks to get all the material — but about the experimental farm — what of that? Of course, we would have to explain ourselves as lost children of the woods. People would wonder and doubt and deride, but we would have been so happy here. The days have been so long and beautiful.”

At daylight the next morning, Clarence came flying back from the Nolans’ with a newspaper in his hand. It was the date of the week before and gave a vivid account of the catastrophe. The account was prefaced with large headlines. The cloudburst, it said, was more terrific than any ever known before in that locality. A large mill was swept down stream and loosened the foundations of the bridge as it swept under it, and in the parting of the bridge, seven lives were lost. Then followed a graphic account of the terror of the people. All night they went about the city in the pouring rain, clad in all kinds of garments, searching for their dead, trying to see what devastations had been made, and searching to find out if there were not more lost by flood or fire, or by the shaking and falling of buildings. Then followed a list of the dead. Among the list of the killed was the name of Eleanor Norwood. The account said:

“ Her house was completely razed to the ground.

Her body has not yet been found, although a diligent search is being made in the ruins, but with little hope of success, as the idea seems to gain credence that there must have been a subterranean opening, a fissure large enough to swallow up some portion of the dwelling and, no doubt, the poor girl's body is lost. . . . A ray of hope came from the fact that someone thought they saw her on the bridge before it fell, and there is just a faint hope that she may have escaped the terrible fate of having been buried alive.

"Another report is that she was seen on the bridge, that terrible night, and must have gone down with it and that she had, without doubt, been drowned. It is all guess work, and yet, as her body cannot be found, friends go back to the first theory, and people are still excavating the ruined house.

"Clarence Bartruff was swept down stream and lost. In a former issue there was a list of the dead: seven people in all. It is to be hoped that the terror is over, but people even yet are afraid to remain in their houses over night, and many would rather remain out under the open sky."

"Then we are indeed out in the world alone, Clarence, and I believe they have really missed us after all, and have made every effort to find my dead body. How strange it sounds! My dead body! Sometimes I think that I might better have died, for nobody will ever believe our purity of motive or that I did this to save your life, and my own. Neither of us was exactly in our right minds that day, and yet you were so careful to keep

me all right with the world,— the Nolan chaperone, and all.”

“Oh, Eleanor, you are not regretting the step, are you?”

“I can never regret finding you, Clarence, alive on the shore when I had suffered all the agony of death to think that you were drowned.”

“I should certainly have died of those chills, my heart nearly stopped beating, until you brought back such a glow by the heating of those pieces of shale, and more than all, by the warmth and glow of your ministrations.”

“And surely you were, for days before, mentally depressed, or you would never have thought of that terrible deed of suicide. I can feel that I have helped you to bear the ills of the flesh, but now we must never go back. We must go somewhere further on, and earn our living.”

“Our living here amounts to just that!”—flipping a coin. He laughed at her fears.

“I never could face the people again, for no explanation would make them believe in us, Clare.”

“Pshaw, Norrie! We could go back just as we are now, and everybody would believe in us; but, of course, we would go, first of all, to the minister.”

“Clarence, it is out of the question. We will go on, now, and ultimately find our way to the cottage. I fear that it was all a sort of hysteria

which caused me to do what I did, but you were wise."

"But you didn't admit that you saved my life, and that is at least something," he said, with mock gravity.

"Yes, you darling," she answered, with a hand-clasp, to reassure herself that he was really so close to her, and a living reality. His wonderful smile was reassuring. Yes, he was really alive; he had been saved from death by her ministrations.

In the excitement which followed the reading of the account in the newspaper, they did not feel much like either preparing a meal, as Eleanor had suggested, creating literature or building the log house in the wood, but eagerly they read every line of the city newspaper, and much as they had loved the woods, the sylvan life began to pall upon the taste of one of them at least, for she was realizing more and more, as the hours passed, that while a man is his own master in the eyes of the world, a woman is more or less the slave of conventionality and established customs, and she well knew that though to the pure all things are pure, yet to the evil-minded nothing is pure, and the high plane of their delightful brotherly association with each other in this sylvan retreat, their absolute freedom from the little tender nothings which so often are the only known vocabulary of an engaged couple, would make no difference in the verdict of the public when that public should begin to comment upon their apparently unchaperoned com-

panionship. She had noticed, too, with vague regret and a shadow of lonely feeling for herself, that Clarence, who was naturally such an athlete, was now never weary of wandering, and he was planning to shoot and slay, in his masculine disregard of the lives of his woodland brothers. His plan was, as soon as he could purchase any kind of a gun, or concoct any kind of a snare, or even get some fishing-tackle worthy of the name, to have the time of his life in field and wood and river, and further even than this, in his entire subjugation to the delight of the anticipated chase after wildwood game, he had not been slow to express the wish that Norrie cared as much for it as he did himself.

“We could tramp miles every day together, as veritable hunters of the wood.”

For answer, she glanced down at her rather uncouth shoes, just beginning to show the further effect of wear and tear, but looking into his happy face, at his robust figure, and noting the absence of all that galled and fretted him in the former life, she felt that after all she had not paid too high a price for his recovery, and her happy smile met his own as usual.

“Could we have believed it possible that a few printed words in a newspaper would have ever held such an attraction for us?”

CHAPTER IX

A little later in the evening, when the sunset had left its deep glow in the western sky, and when they had wandered a little further out of the woods to give their horse the benefit of the clover and timothy which grew along the fences in that secluded country road, Clarence had the precious newspaper in his hand and they were talking of the situation — the strangeness of feeling that they were mourned as dead, and that their death had not met with indifference which they might have supposed, that a diligent search was still being made for their bodies and that from more than one pulpit kind words had been said about them — all this brought a glow of feeling to their hearts and a thought that from that baptism of fire and flood a kinder humanity had emerged.

“I hate to think of going back ever, ever again, for you see we would have to explain. But perhaps I am selfish, Clarence. I must never forget that you have a career ahead of you and, with your rare gifts, that must not wither with disuse. I shall never forget your speech at the convention last year, and how proud I felt of you when, every few minutes, your wit made the people burst into applause. You would like to be a public man and

go into politics, wouldn't you? You would make a success of it, too."

"I doubt it. You see that, like everything else, takes money. One is so handicapped without it, that there is no use trying. I am only too glad of this change from the worry of not having clients, and the joyous reality of having you, Norrie. Why was I so afraid of you in those days? No, I wouldn't go back, the thought would be misery to me," he insisted. "Why, I have just begun to live!"

They were resting on a portion of the broken stone wall, the newspaper between them. Eleanor gave a sudden exclamation—"Oh, Clare, here is just what we were looking for! Read this paragraph."

Clarence took the paper and read:

"As there has been such an increased interest in farming within the last decade, ever since Mr. Burbank has shown to the world that mind can control even the growing things and evolve new species by care, and there has been a growing tendency to start experimental agricultural stations in different states of the Union, we take pleasure in announcing that, in connection with the experimental farm of the Hon. J. L. Raines and his son-in-law, Robert Colin, there has recently been established one of the popular farm schools; one which has not yet gained the dignity of an agricultural college, but possibly the nucleus of that.

"While the projected work is still in embryo, Mr.

Colin has been utilizing some of the boys who were deprived of work by the closing down of the city mills after the recent explosion and flood in our vicinity. He is really teaching them farming on a small scale, during the harvest months, and they have found that it would be possible to employ as many more to advantage."

"That is surely the place for us," cried Eleanor, excitedly.

"I do believe you, Norrie. Then, I suppose we might as well be on the tramp, but to-morrow I must get the roof on our cabin and snare a wood-chuck at least."

A chill of something like prescience of ill startled her, but she did not speak of it.

"We think we can do without the rest of the world," she said, "when the excitement of some terrible catastrophe is upon us, but after all, how interdependent we are! Just the little word of affection and regret when people thought we were dead has made all the difference in the world in our feeling towards the old place, and yet I feel just as you do, that we are scarcely ready to begin the struggle. We might at least try the new plan for a little while until this harvest school is over. This is August; the months of September and October should close the school and then we shall have earned enough to fly away to our little cottage of which I have the key. Here it is safe. You take it, Clarence, and keep it as a talisman. Some day we shall wish to use it."

"You speak a little discouragingly, Norrie dear. Do you dislike so to leave this sylvan place? There is nothing to compel us to go yet."

"I do believe you would be willing to stay forever here. I believe that all men would go back to first principles, live in the forests, fish, hunt, wander at will and never feel any of the responsibilities of community life, but to women, I think it might grow excessively tiresome; we want, sometimes, our own human kind."

"Well, then, we will plan to leave here before long and tramp to this farmer's place. While I did not know about the farm school, I know the Colin's place well. I have passed it many times in my boy's tramps. It is only about six miles from here. I suppose there is a great chance for boys and men, as there must be every different kind of work, from gathering apples, digging potatoes, to shelling corn and feeding the chickens. Of course, we'll take our horse along. Something of a 'come-down' from a lawyer's shingle, but for my own part, I am willing to begin life all over again. The world is a new world to me."

Eleanor was leaning over and glancing at the paper, which was still spread out on his knee.

"It is just as well, after all, that we did not see either priest or minister in our hurried departure — read that."

In small type, he read by the fading light: "No married men need apply."

"Well, then, we had better give up the whole

thing and go back, for one of the first things I had thought of, in getting out of the woods, was to find either clergyman or lawyer to perform the ceremony, for although I consider that we are just as much married in the sight of God as if twenty priests or ministers had prayed over us, yet you are so fastidious that you must have your marriage certificate in black and white, so that you can study it and pore over it at your will; and after all, you are just as I like to have you, Norrie. You have grown dearer every day. Neither of us need ever have anything to regret, even in the world's hard code. Mrs. Nolan has been the dandiest kind of a chaperone, and your little room there has been half way comfortable, hasn't it? As for me, I'll never feel like sleeping under a roof again. Oh, this elixir of fresh air! This waking up in the morning and hearing the birds building their nests in the pine or hemlock that has sheltered you. I love it!

"And your new name, Norrie — why, it is just the thing, but I must call you Eleanor part of the time, for it is the name of my dreams. Again and again I have called to you through the darkness, speaking your name aloud, softly, and then alarmed lest anyone might have heard me, for even doors have ears."

"You have made me so happy, dear. Do you know I have thought sometimes that I had lost your love by doing what might have seemed to some, such a strange thing as to go and search for

you dead or alive; and then to be so ready to come away with you. Are you quite sure that you care just as much?"

"A million times more! But my Eleanor doesn't need to be told that. The blessed sight of you that awful morning will never leave me while I have my senses! And that I am here at all, alive and with you, shows plainly that God meant us for each other. Such things are never mere happenings."

"I believe you. You must tell me more some day, about that dreadful depression which led you to think of — of —"

"Ending it all?"

"Yes; I never can say that word. It gives me the horrors."

"Well, don't say it. The mood has passed so entirely that I know it can never, never come back. I am really and truly a well man!"

"And my help has meant something to you?"

"Everything — everything! You think because you are petite enough to wear the fourteen-year-old-boy's suit, knee pants, belted jacket and military cap, and brush your short curling locks under that semi-military cap — it is awfully becoming and awfully swell, Norrie — but because you have the boy's suit you seem to think you must have the boy's nature. You have been an awful prude, too. Why, you've never even allowed me to kiss your lips — but I shall! —" suiting the action to the words, and making her blush as rosy red as

the sunset sky which was within the range of their vision, as they sat on the stone wall enjoying the coming of the gloaming.

"Why," he went on, "it's a wonder that you haven't made me forget the question of sex altogether, and think you are a real twelve-year-old that I can boss and scold and order to help me snare the wild creatures. I've caught some, by the way, but they are so gifted with an extra sense, that they get out of their prisons and escape."

A smile gleamed from her eyes, as she glanced up at him, and wreathed her lips.

"I believe you opened my box-trap!"

"Yes, I did, Clarence. Where we are so happy, how could I see anything a prisoner?"

"Well, I don't blame you."

"But it wasn't an eagle, though."

"I would feel like doing just the same myself, in God's country, and so I shall not find fault with you."

"Oh, Clarence! I have found so many different birds,—such a variety; warblers with their notes so different from each other and yet so alike. They are so tiny. How do they ever travel thousands of miles and know just what their destination is to be? And the queer thing is, that they aren't a bit afraid of me. While you were away fishing, yesterday, I had a chance to study a pair of them for an hour. They had a song which was like a cheery ripple,—was almost a continuous strain. When I get another piano, if I ever do,

I could set it to music. Who knows but that the piano at home might have been saved intact? Some angle formed of the falling timbers, like the one that opened under the stairs where Walter's boy shoes and his suits have hung ever since he went away. I would give all I possess to see how much was covered up by the crash of the walls, and how much is still standing. Let me read that sketch once more, that tells of my demise,—”

“Some think that she perished in the ruins of her prostrate house, and some that she was seen on the bridge, etc.—” read Clarence by the fading light.

“Bless your heart, Eleanor,” he continued, “if ever an angel from heaven reached down to hell and snatched a human creature from the jaws of death, you did that. I can close my eyes and see you tramping through bush and briar. I was going to say the one woman in the world, but as I look down I hardly know what to call you.”

“That is all I ask, Clare, dear. Wherever we go in the future, how we shall always love this place!”

“Yes, and we'll have the little cabin to show for it. Our first home! only think of it. It will only take a few days longer now, to put the roof on, and the Nolans have shown their interest in a thousand ways.”

“I'm just a little afraid of them, Clarence.”

“Why?”

“Oh, you know why. The inquisitive little eyes

of those children of the older family would penetrate through all disguises in time."

"Yes, I can see from your standpoint how you feel. Well, I'll be advised by you, Norrie, even though I'm so dead in love with the woods, and surely you are too. I would go in a minute if you say so, but you really love it?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! I am in love with everything. Even the Hamadryad spirits of the trees make speech with me. Not only the birds, but the wild creatures seem to know me. They come rather close, with a startled look in their eyes, and then look straight into mine with a confident intelligence, as if they knew I wouldn't hurt them."

"Wise creatures!" he said, laughing, and feasting his eyes upon those expressive eyes of hers, as the light faded.

"No, Clarence, I say let us go on. Let us go to Mr. Colin's farm and earn a little money, if they have any place for us. It would be awkward for us not to go and explain ourselves, but from there we will plan a letter to the Mayor of the city, whom we both know. Through him, I can later get a little money from the bank and go back to my own costume and my own character before we make our appearance in the city. To go away in a boy's suit, when an earthquake or an explosion that seemed like one, had driven us, would be considered all right by everybody at the time, but to appear there again when our funeral

obsequies had been sung, would be an entirely different thing."

Clarence could laugh at the picture she presented. His smile was reassuring. Her love for him had grown. As for him, he was in that happy, care-free mood where it mattered little to him what happened so long as she was at his right hand, but to her, with the refinement of soul which was her sweet characteristic, she naturally had her doubts about the wisest course to pursue. More than once while Clarence was enjoying his primitive method of being a woodsman, and snaring some wild creature for food, as the aborigines of the forest might, she had spent an hour alone in her grapevine hammock and the thought had come to her at such times, had she, after all, done the right thing in the eyes of the world? She knew that no saint or angel could have been more chaste and pure, and in fact that it had been the pure instinct of motherliness innate in every woman, which led her to leave everything and win Clarence back from the borders of the grave, by the constant ministrations of those two days at the mill, and the three days in the woods, and through it all, his chivalry had never once failed, nor his high consideration of respect for her slightest wish, but after all, was it her imagination? Did he care less for her in the deepest sense than he had done when he was in doubt of her own affection? She looked down at her boy's shoes again, now somewhat shabby, thrust her hands up through her

short curling hair and looked off towards that setting sun, with a great desire for light. She was sorry now, that she had clipped off her curls. They lay wrapped in oak leaves down under her oak tree desk. There was now more than ever a growing doubt in her mind about everything. Was she unhappy? What, in her mad impulse of love, had she done? After all, can woman afford to be anything but conventional? But her later view of things made her feel that she would urge still more the scheme of the farm school, for in this way she could go back to her own individuality. She could find some place to buy suitable clothing and eventually carry out her plan of communicating with the Mayor of the city. How well they had known her in her society days! Surely they would believe in her.

"What is the matter, my Norrie? You haven't spoken a word for half an hour. Are you homesick?"

For answer, she leaned a little nearer to him, and his arm encircled her in a closer embrace, but to her imagination it was still, without doubt, the embrace of brother rather than that of a lover. Well, that was as it should be, no doubt, but what a contradictory thing is the human heart! And how little he guessed the cause of the tear that trickled over her cheek.

Whenever his chivalry was aroused, he became the sweet sympathizer. He may have read a little of her heart, and have had some remote gleam of

what such isolation from her kind might mean to her. "Look up at me, Eleanor. Have you been crying? I do believe you have."

With the contradictoriness of woman's nature, she now wept in earnest, but at the same time smiled through her tears, as his embrace grew more fond and lover-like, and she not only permitted him to take a long coveted kiss, but invited it while they sat, hand clasped in hand, until long after the twilight rendered the wood opaque and all the birds had fallen asleep in their nests. Yet hardly all, for the wood thrush called in plaintive notes to his mate, and the hermit thrush also, far over the silent meadows, and from branch to branch a squirrel leaped in the abandon of the woodsy freedom and gladness when it thought no enemy was near.

"How I would like to snare it," said Clarence, as it came running along almost to their feet. "But then you would open the box."

"Why, it has something in its mouth,—a little ball of wool or something."

In the fright that it had when Clarence had suddenly leaped to his feet, it had dropped the ball and scurried away. Examining it, they found that it was a baby squirrel. They picked up the creature and placed it in the notch of a tree near by, then went a little out of sight. Soon the mother squirrel came and carried it to a safer place.

It seemed as if every flower in the woods had become known to Eleanor, and every wild bird, as

well as the four-footed creatures, the little gray, furry balls of intelligence such as she invariably released from the box trap and sent them away scampering to their native haunts.

The Nolans, their only neighbors, were helpful in their genial Irish fashion, loaning the young hunters saw and ax, in fact anything they required for the hewing of the logs for the proposed hut, and offering them old-fashioned iron kettles for the improvised fire, and the last a loaf of delicious bread. Norrie had her little room there, and they could hardly take leave without bidding them a really affectionate good-by.

"I'm that sorry ye're going to lave us, my dears," said Mrs. Nolan, senior, with motherly kindness. "Why, the childer, they'll not know what to do with themselves any more, for they liked ye both so well. And would ye believe it,—they just talk about the little one that ye call 'Norrie' all the time, and I must get them a boy's cape just like that, the first time I go to town."

Hardly conscious of what she had on, Eleanor turned away from the sharp little eyes, as if they might have read her secret,—that she was not in her own costume. Her impulse for a moment, was to give them the little military cape, but she resisted the impulse. It should never go out of her possession. What would they think if she should open the small parcel which she had under its folds, the white dress and belongings of a lady—a real lady of the world—why not?

And now she rather wished that they would take those sharp child eyes away from her altogether,—from her boy's cap to her worn out shoes.

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PART II

CHAPTER I

In accordance with their new plan, Clarence and Eleanor untethered the faithful horse and started in seemingly happy mood for the home of Mr. Colin. The day was a beautiful one, and with the "boy" Norrie on horseback, and Clarence jogging along at his side, they made their way in the direction which Mr. Nolan had indicated, through a fine farming country dotted here and there with plain farmer's homes of an unostentatious kind, with their well-painted buildings, their "homey" looking families of fowls in the door-yards, and their home-cultivated vegetable gardens. There was nothing about the appearance of the two travelers to attract attention, and feeling secure in the few pance in their possession that they could pay their way, they made some purchases at one of the country homes, some eggs, milk and cream, and still having a couple of the cups they had used in the old mill, they fared sumptuously.

It was nearly nightfall when they reached Mr. Colin's residence. This was of the old colonial type, and they were almost discouraged to see that there were signs of wealth here which they had not observed anywhere else. An automobile stood in

the sweeping roadway which led up to the house, a fountain splashed in the garden, and flowers which showed a gardener's care, bloomed everywhere. There were arbors and grottoes, great old trees of a century's growth and beauty, and care on every bordered walk. Fearing that some mistake had been made about the idea of the farm school, and that possibly they had come to the wrong place, Clarence thought of the plan of taking the horse into the further entrance to the grounds and see what presented itself in the shape of prospective employment.

Sure that no one would know them here, they came the more boldly into the yard and saw that a number of farm boys were just ready for their afternoon meal. They wondered if a certain gentlemanly looking man might be the farmer himself, Mr. Colin, as he seemed to be speaking pleasantly to one and to another of the workers as they had gathered at the sound of the supper call, to eat their afternoon meal in the open air.

It was indeed Mr. Colin who came forward pleasantly to greet them. Mr. Colin at once discovered a refinement of speech and manner of both which led him, after giving one of his deputies charge of the horse, to invite the strangers into his own beautiful home. Before they could explain themselves or their purpose, he had called his wife, who was reading on the ample piazza.

"I have brought two travelers here to ask your hospitality, Grace. It is too late for them to go

further to-night. What do you think you can do to make them comfortable? ”

She was a beautiful lady, of nearly middle age, and of agreeable manners.

“ I don’t believe there is an inch of room except in the dormitory, or in the wagon house loft, but if you don’t mind trying that for the young man, we might see what can be done with the young boy.”

“ We have heard that you have a farm school or college, and thought we would like to make some inquiry about it ; but we must have been mistaken, and would not like to encroach upon your hospitality.”

“ You are not mistaken altogether. We have planned, and to some extent carried out, such an enterprise, but people are slow to enter upon any project that is unusual. The farm school proper, is about half a mile from here. We are in a position of giving it support, that’s all.”

A fresh interest appeared in his face and also in that of his wife, but they did not question.

“ Well, you must not go further to-night, anyway,” said the lady. “ In preparation for the school, my father and Mr. Colin have had some comfortable rooms finished off in a large, airy space outside, and if you could be satisfied with that yourself, the younger boy could have the little room off Father’s study, couldn’t he, Robert? ”

“ Why, certainly. That would be a good arrangement, for the time being, anyway.”

"I can see," said Mrs. Colin sympathetically, "that the boy is not over strong. I would like the chance to nurse him up a little."

The blush which mantled Eleanor's cheek deepened perceptibly, and she was about to speak and explain on the spot, but Clarence spoke first in grateful acknowledgment of the kindness and there was no further opportunity.

"Come with me then," the beautiful lady said, rising. "Robert, you may show the way to your own special dormitory. Mr.— Mr.—"

"Clarence Bartruff," answered Clarence, "and Norlean or Norrie."

"Come then, Norrie, I want to introduce you to my father, for while you occupy that room you will have to go through his study or library, but you will not mind that, for he is very fond of young people, and in truth, he is the originator of the farm school scheme, and you will be able to help him with that. The room is divided from his now by heavy draperies, but you'll not mind that for the night; or you could close the door."

"Thank you," murmured Eleanor under her breath. She would have fallen on the good lady's neck and confessed the whole, but the library it seems was on the lower floor. She had just to open the door near where she was sitting and there they were! Mr. Raines, Mrs. Colin's father, was sitting near a window where the honeysuckles grew. He was taking advantage of the waning light to read his daily paper. Near another window was

his desk and papers and books were in plenty strewn about as if in use. She had afterwards to learn that he was something of a recluse among them, but having important literary enterprises, and even from this retreat managing an editorial page of an important city newspaper. Eleanor's heart warmed to him at once, as he turned from his desk when Mrs. Colin entered the room.

"I am bringing you a companion, Father," said Mrs. Colin. "The house is so full that his brother has to sleep in the dormitory, so I am going to give this boy the lower hall den, if you don't mind."

"By all means, Grace. He is a likely little lad. Let him come and welcome."

"Thank you," whispered Eleanor, in a faltering voice. She realized more than ever that she was in a false position and even then would have remonstrated, but just at that moment two little girls came flying into their grandfather's room and made confession impossible. The children paused a moment at sight of a stranger, but only a moment, for they had found a beautiful butterfly and, at the risk of injuring its delicate wings, they had brought it to their grandfather to know the species.

Eleanor's straightforwardness and transparency of character rebelled against apparent concealment. It was all right when they were both children of the wood and field, but now among cultivated people,—what could she do? Her fair complexion and golden hair gave her the appear-

ance of a boy of extreme youth, and her thought went back to the first day of her wood's experience, when Clarence had gone out on his first foraging expedition she had twisted the curling locks around her finger in their exquisite fineness, her glass being the tree bordered pool at her feet, since she had put Clarence's pocket scissors, in his absence, to an unworthy use and had clipped off each golden curl, thrusting them into her coat pocket as she heard his footstep crushing the twigs with hasty strides on his return to her, and she had stood before him a still more beautiful boy, but suddenly she had there met with his first short, sharp reproof.

"That,—that, Eleanor, is really a sacrilege!"

Tears had come with the suddenness of the reprimand, but the tears at that time did not linger long. She had convinced him of the absolute necessity for the disguise, at least for the time that their sojourn was in the forest. But now, of course, her clipped curling locks added to the subterfuge of the illusion.

"You see, I have to be a boy, Clarence," she had then said, "for I have not a single change of clothing in my 'grown-up' bundle, and nothing whatever but the evening dress and belongings which I had on that terrible night, which we have kept with us merely as a memento because we could gather it up in a nutshell and because I was not willing to forget the outward appearance of womanliness." He had then gladly forgiven her,

wondering that the same thought had not occurred to himself. If they were to keep their incognito until some good fortune turned up why, of course, they must keep it to the letter. He had said and thought then, that she was right, after all, but now, in the presence of others, the boy's garb was equivalent to a deception.

The little girls were there, claiming the attention of both mother and grandfather, so saying "Good night" with a scarcely audible "thank you both for your kindness," she slipped into the little room assigned her. As the door was not very tightly closed, she could see that Mrs. Colin lingered, adjusting a folding bed in the library, with its luxurious hangings, thus changing the whole appearance of the room, for one of the cases of books was merely a modern folding bed with all its royal appurtenances. Instead of sinking at once into the soft dainty bed in her small room, she went over to the one window and looked out upon the night. She felt a regret for the loss of the primitive grapevine hammock and the elixir of the midnight pine-laden air, and she also missed her companion, grown so dear by his thousand and one lovable traits and his sweet consideration for her. Even in her own fastidious delicacy which had kept her from encouraging or permitting in this wood's bower even the kiss of loyal affection, except on that one occasion, much as she had longed for it, but under the strange, unusual circumstances of the case, she knew it was not

wise. Some people would have deemed her too prudish.

Her attention was now called to the company in the library, for her door was still slightly ajar and she could not adjust the draperies. There were the two children, the mother and grandfather, a dog, a kitten,— or rather two, and the gauzy-winged butterfly now trying to find the light. To Eleanor, the picture presented home life in its most genial aspect. It seemed that the little girls were having a rollicking time with their grandfather, while awaiting his good night kiss.

“Tell us a story, Grandpere, about when you were a boy.” With one on each knee, the story was told, while the mother was also a listener; the dog lying in repose and one kitten apiece on the lounge near by. Eleanor could not hear every word, but by the interest and occasionally ringing laugh of appreciation from the children, she knew the kind of a home she had entered and thanked God for it, but there was a gloom which she could not overcome. It seemed as if Clarence were a hundred miles away from her, even though she could look over and see the lights still in the dormitory and knew that he was there. But the thought that she could not come near him, could not say “good night,” how disturbing it all was. For five days now, they had knelt and said their prayers together in the wooded aisles, before she went to the Nolan’s to sleep, beginning it at the old mill, but at length, whether it was her boy’s costume or

even her too frequently expressed appreciation of Clarence which she could not help sometimes reiterating in those wooded solitudes, she had fancied the shadow of indifference very often in his attitude, varied by an excess of attention. A man needs the abrasions of society; he needs the excitement of the chase even in love.

"Perhaps I have made the mistake of my life. Oh, Clarence, Clarence, if I could see you just for a moment!"

It was with relief that Eleanor heard the children say "good night," but she could not sleep. Mrs. Colin had lingered, and so she was unwittingly a listener to a private conversation. Should she spring up and close or lock her door? No, both Mrs. Colin and Mr. Raines knew that "the boy" was there. They may have thought him asleep, with the deep unconsciousness of youth.

"Don't go just yet, Gracie, I have something to ask your opinion about," Mrs. Colin's father said. "I have had a letter to-day, which may result in some change in my life. It's the one I've been looking for."

"I believe, Papa, that I can guess its contents," her voice trembled slightly. "Is it from Mrs. Holmes?"

"Yes! I have it here. A beautiful letter. I would like you to have a reading of it. You are so different from most daughters. She wouldn't care. Her letters, you know, are sought by the autograph hunter, she is so well known."

"But this is different? Treasure it, Papa. Put it away safely, but tell me as much as you wish."

She had passed to his side, and with a caressing motion, smoothed his soft silken hair.

"There is only one thing that might seem an obstacle," he continued; "she has naturally a sentiment in favor of the name which she has borne so long, and which her son so honorably represents."

"You can understand that, Papa, I should feel the same way. Edmund doesn't make the slightest objection, I am sure?"

"No, not in the least. He is a loyal son and an unselfish one."

"I thought so."

"You would not think, Gracie, that such a step would mean on my part any disloyalty to your dear mother's memory?"

"No, you dear casuist, I would not. That blessed woman, Mrs. Holmes, your life-long friend, has loved you all these years without knowing it, just as you have loved her. Don't I recall how, as children we used to ask all kinds of favors of you just after the mail had brought a letter from her?"

She had succeeded in winning a smile from him, yet he went back for a moment to the past.

"Your mother's patient suffering always appealed to me. The memory of it is ever present — the mother of my babies!"

"Oh, Papa, love, you were an angel through all that time." She spoke through tears, however. "Do find what comfort you can in life, and think, too, of what it may mean to her, who is alive and of us."

With a return of his happy voice, for there had been a strain of sadness in it, he said: "I had an argument in my favor which she had never thought of,—it was that she, of all women, need never regret the change of a name, since, her own was known the world over, and that her son was a worthy representative of the name. Should this take place, Gracie dear, I shall make arrangements to turn this property over to you and the girls, and I think,—"

"Oh, Papa, don't speak of that. My plans for you are so different. Let me make a suggestion. It is this: The summer classes are nearly over now, why could you not keep on here after we go to the city for the winter. Don't delay the marriage. It is the most beautiful thing. I can feel so happy about you. Stay here through all the autumn, until the northern rigor of climate warns you both to go south with the birds."

"You are an artist, Grace."

"I could paint a picture for you, dear, if you would let me. I think she will be here to-morrow at dinner. Edmund is coming after the preaching service. We'll have a happy family party. Why not?"

"You're a wonderful manager, Grace. I think

you could coerce the planet, but I've asked her to take a drive with me to-morrow afternoon."

"All the better. Well, good night, Papa." She had evidently reached up to meet his good night kiss, and then the door closed upon her.

It must have been long after midnight, and yet Eleanor had not slept. Everything was new and strange. In that hall bedroom off the library, the little "boy" lay weeping. Here was a rudderless craft on this new social sea. How to pull for the shore?

She was not to be totally disappointed after all. Just after she had thought the household asleep, after the early retiring habit of the country, a few pebbles were thrown lightly against her window. She sprang up quickly, with an intuitive premonition of the source of the call at the window, and without doubt, there was Clarence in the garden beside the honeysuckles, partly hidden by their luxuriance.

CHAPTER II

"Norrie!"

"Oh, Clarence, you are an angel! Reach up, darling. I can stoop down far enough to clasp your hand and feel that it is really you. There! how good of you to come! How did you know?"

"One of the little girls pointed it out to the other, and you may be sure I kept my ears open to hear what they were saying. They were saying: 'He sleeps in the room off Grandpere's and Mamma says we can show him our little garden tomorrow.' You have won them already you see."

"Oh, Clarence dear, that makes me think how much I had to ask you. I wanted so much to get your opinion. Ought I not, before another day passes, find an opportunity to tell them?"

"Eventually, dear, but meanwhile there is no hurry. The world is all before us. Any immediate change would make it impossible for us to meet. As it is, I am hoping that you and I may be detailed together for some garden work in this paradise. The relief to my mind from the galling strain of being a briefless lawyer and a hopeless lover is so great. Isn't it worth a little dissimulation which will, of course, be rectified before long? Just now when the air is full of the fire and the flood, one may be excused for any amount

of concealment. Apart from the inconvenience to ourselves, we are doing nobody any harm. We are really among cultivated people, with the exception possibly, of the harvest hands."

"Oh, yes, I noticed that at once, and you were so dear to suggest some place like this for me."

"It was my wish, of course, but Mrs. Colin herself, dear woman, suggested it. She thought you an invalid, but I thank God you are well, delicate as you look, dear, and we can see each other every day, possibly have some work side by side. Even if the plan of the farm school in the adjoining colony fails, we can gain some experimental knowledge of the business which will last us through life. We can put it in practice when we come to settle down on our little farm in the country."

"Be sure you keep the key, Clare, I gave it to you yesterday. It was such a good omen!"

It was true they had only had a short time to form any judgment of these people or their surroundings. In the sweet homeyness of the place, however, they could not but be comforted and healed. They had virtually been taken into the family circle, and treated more like guests than as helpers. Evidently, in the little glimpse they had both had before the supper hour, all the residents were at home.

"You don't need to worry about telling our secret, Norrie, for as it is, they feel perfectly at ease with us. We are like their children. They can tell us what we must or must not do, they can

coddle and praise or even scold us, whereas if I should show them my diploma or let them know that you were really a society queen in our native city, there would, right away, be that everlasting barrier of condition."

"Yet condition or no condition, Clare," she said, "they must know the absolute truth from either your lips or mine before many hours have passed, for I refuse to mingle in the family circle so long as I am neither fish, flesh nor fowl."

"Nor even good red herring?" he continued, finishing the apt saying.

"But even though I could not bring myself to go to the library with the others, be sure and come yourself, to-morrow night, Clarence. A happy thought has struck me. My little room opening off the library, will be a capital place to hear all you have to say, and you must put in your own word, Clarence. You are gifted in speech, as I know to my own happiness."

"Possibly you are right, Norrie, and your transparent soul would be happier to make a clean breast of it all. There has been nothing wrong. Don't make yourself wretched by thinking so, and about telling everything,—well, do as you think best. Whatever you do is the right thing always."

"It seems as if everything comes to us, doesn't it? I really didn't realize what I was doing that fateful morning, for I only saw that you were helpless and needed care, but it might have been taken up by foolish tongues and such a scandal made

of it, but here we are in this safe haven, and Mrs. Colin will be motherly and sisterly, I am sure. I just long to tell her exactly the whole story. But what seems wonderful to me is the way I have been protected from evil tongues. She is an angel."

"She is an admirable woman, and that is better than to be an angel."

"Perhaps Mrs. Colin would help us if she knew all."

"More likely they would grow suspicious and we would be deprived of these delightful tête-à-têtes in the garden," the man soul of Clarence suggested.

"What do you think is the reason that we are treated with so much more consideration than the other helpers, Clarence? Did it ever occur to you that they may think already that we are victims of the flood?"

"I have thought it possible, but I have come to the conclusion that this family is so full of the milk of human kindness, that they have to make pets of us. Mr. Colin told me, to-day, that they often had parlor discussions about the best methods of farming, a sort of agricultural symposium, and that if I intended to be a practical farmer, it wouldn't hurt me to join in these discussions. Mr. Raines, he said, had made a deep study of this subject, and it was like listening to one of the finest lectures, to have a talk from him about practical farming and would you believe it? He in-

vited us both to join them in the library after the children had been put to bed to-morrow night. 'We have this symposium every Saturday evening,' Mr. Colin said, 'and I hope you and your brother may come.' I will be coming over for an hour to-morrow night, and you must be there too."

"Well, Clarence, I am not going. Absolutely I refuse to mingle in the family under false pretenses."

"You silly child!"

"How strange it seemed to have our names read off to-night in the paper they were reading here, and to think that we were really the ones who were thought to be drowned. I could hardly keep from screaming."

"And I dared not even look at you."

"What touched my heart was that the whole populace mourned for us. I never thought that anyone would. Here we had the whole story told more fully than in that first scrap of paper in the woods that the Nolans gave us."

"It takes death and burial to make people confess their likings, though. Probably if we appeared again now, they might kindly inform us that they would rather we had been drowned," said the man-soul again. "They would resent our good fortune."

"I really don't believe they would now, Clarence, they would sympathize in our romance. They thought I had been drowned, too, and at first they thought I had been swallowed up in the

dismantled house, and later that I too, fell with the bridge, that you leaped in after me and I almost had to cry when the paper said: 'Lovely in their lives and in their deaths they were not divided,' and really, you know, I wasn't on the bridge at all, but was saved afterward by a miracle, when the house fell about my ears, when I was trying to pierce the darkness to see if that awful fire was near your dwelling."

"How little I guessed you thought of me. Everything will turn out right," Clarence said low and earnestly. "We will go to the cottage for a while anyway (after, you know what — the minister's). We'll take our horse along. The owner no doubt has been lost, or if saved he has given him up as lost and he has been such a friend to us. When we get rich enough from the proceeds of our little cottage farm, we'll find the owner and pay for him."

"You always forget, Clare, that I have the title to almost a third of the city."

"Let the city have it."

"Mrs. Colin seems to think that I am ripe for a decline. She may think there is danger of my lungs, but the dear soul is mistaken. I could shout with a force that would reach the razed city. But there, I was just about to shout right here, in my gladness. I'm glad that I had closed that door."

"You might shout with all freedom. Everybody is asleep. I'll have to go now. Good night.

You might have to be out early, and if you do, just keep watch for me."

"You may be sure I will, dear. Good night. I am so much happier from having seen you. I was in the depths of despair. We have had such a lovely long talk."

Eleanor had not lighted her lamp. She threw herself down on her couch with a feeling of intense happiness. The fingers of her right hand still tingled with the good night kiss of her lover, for lover he was truly, once more. She had leaned far out of the little window to reach that hand, and the fervent clasp of it in his had imparted strength and courage.

She did not see Clarence again until the afternoon of the following day. As no special farm tasks had as yet been assigned to her, she wandered away by herself, hoping to have an interview with Clarence in some part of the field or farm, but she soon learned that Mr. Colin, having to go away to a distant city for a few days at the beginning of the week, had asked him to superintend a gang of workmen on a distant part of the farm and in fact had intrusted him with a most important work. It was about dusk that she saw him coming toward his quarters, and she knew that in her boy's garb, it would excite no comment for her to meet him and learn what should be the order of the day and if he would have to be away just as much and as far, the next day.

"But to-morrow is the Sabbath," she said rever-

ently. "Our second Sabbath since the 'drowning.'"

"What it has meant to me nobody can tell; our dear days of companionship."

"A whole week!"

"Sure enough, and a happy week it has been to me, Norrie. To-day I have felt a special uplifting. It is so nice to be in a position of trust."

"I felt a little of that elixir of hope myself to-day; the thought of that stolen interview last night has been so helpful."

"Have you overcome your scruples now about keeping your own counsel and not telling any secrets, or did you lie awake thinking about it?"

"I didn't lie awake, but I sought an opportunity to speak to Mrs. Colin, intending to make confession, but she misunderstood me and when I said I had something to tell her, she said, 'Yes, Norrie dear, I know, but you must not be discouraged, we will soon have you well again.' Then I was just about to explain, when a carriage load of people came driving up to the house and so I vanished, and have not seen her since. Do I look like a consumptive?"

"Far from it, but you are rather petite, and your color comes and goes, and then the exquisite fineness of those curling locks just beginning to grow out again — you naughty child to do what you did — altogether, you have that transparency of complexion that might indicate illness."

They saw that it would be impossible to be alone

just then — it was late afternoon — but Clarence had found how delightfully some of the evenings were spent; one of the men had told him. Mr. Raines, who was interested in the proposed farm school, had invited all who desired to listen to an informal talk on some subject connected with farming or other things, for twenty minutes or half an hour every Saturday evening, in the library.

“Oh, then I shall be hidden in my little room just off the library, but I can hear what they talk about, you may be very sure, but I will not appear nor in fact shall I ever appear again until I can appear in my own person.”

“If you stay in your little room, then look out of your window later, after the lecture is over,” Clarence said, as they came up from the field together.

After their second delightful supper in the grape arbor, the two came slowly towards the house. Mrs. Colin saw them and passed a kindly word of recognition.

This farmer's family seemed to be one of exceptional refinement. They did not carry their toil nor the effect of it into their home. If Mr. Colin had been in the field with his men any part of the day, he always refreshed himself by a bath and dressed for dinner. None of the helpers were as yet served at the family table, they were all well served at a different hour, and to-day, to the great delight of Clarence and Eleanor, their dainty supper had been served to them in the garden. It

was in a happy mood that Eleanor told Clarence of some of her surroundings within doors, and her retirement to her own little room just before she had mingled much with the family, the evening previous, but she did not repeat the conversation between Mrs. Colin and her father.

The next evening lamps had been lighted early. Books and papers were there in profusion. Not the daily papers only, with their barren records of crime, envy and passion, but the weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies, with their noble literature, their pleasant romances and their appeals to the higher humanities. Here was the reward for the day's toil, and healing for the jaded mental appetite. How Eleanor, who had dwelt on their wood's sojourn, rejoiced to see the healthful return of sane thought and feeling. She had observed with delight that a work cure, not a rest cure was what both Clarence and herself had needed. The half hour of free conversation in the gloaming, at their open air meal, was what they most of all enjoyed that day. They began to realize happily, that here they had found the true American home, and they had spoken of it with lowered voices and careful consideration of their surroundings, lest even the little birds might have ears. They both had had but a flash of thought of the time when they, too, might have such a home somewhere not too far from the haunts of men, but there was no time now to refer to what they had so cursorily observed. The moments were too precious!

They had been in a shady arbor overgrown with roses and climbing vines; for either with intuitive knowledge of their polish and refinement, or with a motherly desire to feed Norrie well up on account of his delicate health, they were treated like honored guests. But whatever the motive, they warmly appreciated it. It was only the close of the second afternoon of their stay, but what progress they had made in the good graces of the heads of the house! The little girls came out and with their own hands brought them their dessert of luscious cake and cream. The children were invited to stay, and running back to ask if they might, they brought their own ice cream and cake and in their artless prattle were very companionable. When their mother called them, with ready obedience they sprang to do her bidding. When they were out of sight, Eleanor looked at her friend with a gasp of relief.

"Why did I ever get myself into this absurd position? How I could love those children if I could only appear in my own character."

"That will all come in time."

"When it does, I have more than half a mind, after I get rid of these boy's garments, to ask Mrs. Colin a question. They need a teacher: that was one thing I learned from my little room when they were in the library. I should just love to see their development. That is," she said in a sober after thought, "if Mrs. Colin would trust me."

CHAPTER III

Once in the hour of marital confidence before retiring, in fact, just the previous night, Mrs. Colin had said to her husband:

"Since I have learned that these two young people came from the city just after the explosion and flood and fire, yet that they never mention it, I have some strange misgivings and imaginings. When you were reading that thrilling account of the affair yesterday, Norrie turned his head so suddenly away, and his face blushed like a girl's. I do think they must have had some part in it or have known something about it. Do you suppose their parents were lost in the flood, and that they have started out to earn something for themselves, and don't like to speak of the past? I am just sure they are keeping something back, but I do love them both and whatever it is, we must trust them. In the California earthquake some years ago, people traveled in strange disguises. Why not here?"

"I don't know anything about any of your surmises, my dear, but I do know that Clarence Bart-ruff is the best worker I have ever had, for two days on the farm. He not only has brains, but he is a gentleman. He has already, in one day, I think, saved me the expense of a law suit. He is

one of the kind of men who would not antagonize the farm hands. He is willing to work as they do. As to his brother, why he is just a pet. Do you think he will be likely to pull through?"

"I am sure of it; he seems better already. Both of them have said they had something to tell me, but you know I hate to have people dwell on their illnesses, so I just promptly put them off. I have been thinking, after all, that it might be something else. There has been no opportunity for their confessional.

"Should this be the truth about our two strangers, Robert, it seems to me that our old world hasn't lost its fine element of romance. I told you, you know, about Papa and Mrs. Holmes?"

"I suspected it long ago. Does her son Edmund approve?"

"He is in sympathy, just as we are."

Mrs. Colin threw aside her book; it was "*La Vita Nuova*," and drawing her chair to the lounge where her husband lay resting and ready to listen to her animated talk,—he was always a good listener, seldom a persistent talker,—she smoothed the gathering care-creases from his brow, and referring to the book, said: "Do you believe that these sonnets of Dante's would ever have been written if it had not been for his life's thwarted ambitions? Should we ever have heard of Beatrice?"

"Oh, I suppose these 'loves of the poets,' 'art loves,' or 'literary friendships,' mean something to

the world. Most likely we only hear of them because those who wield the pen like to exploit themselves and make the most of things on paper or on canvas, but taking your father as an illustration, he has certainly grown ten years younger in this culmination of his romance."

"I believe, Robert, that sometimes, as in Papa's case, these lifelong friendships mean more than the fitful love between man and maiden, simply because they demand nothing. Unselfishly they wish the very best the world can give, not alone for self, but for each other. Heaven's repose takes the place of rush and fever, and, to say the least, there is certainly stimulation for the birth of thought —"

"Oh, Gracie, you are getting beyond me. I am precious glad that you are just a dear human woman, although I own to enjoying our aviating experiences into the unknown, for with it all, you are intensely practical. What a mother you have been to those two girls, asleep there in the next room, and you have a way of mothering all my farm boys. Yet they never presume upon it; your gentle dignity protects you. If our strangers tell you anything, keep me in mind, Grace; I want to hear it."

"You delightful old gossip, of course I will."

Deeply did Eleanor regret that the circumstances of dress and condition had deprived her of meeting with the family in the library to hear Mr. Raines talk on a subject which deeply interested

her. That she heard it all from the little hall room, with its partially opened door, made no difference in her feeling. She was in an utterly false and an undignified position. She had made every effort to explain and Clarence himself had told her that he had said to Mr. Colin, "We have a story to tell you." But so firmly had the idea of Norrie's illness taken possession of their gentle hearts that it was difficult to get them over the preconceived notion and give either of them an opportunity to talk in an unhindered way about the things which had happened. She had thought it the part of wisdom to decline the invitation to the lecture, as it was called, but in her darkened room, looking out to the light, she could see the refined face of Clarence as he had met with the others, and note his interested, eager listening to every word, and when at length his opinion was asked upon some question, and he joined naturally in the conversation, showing that, in intellect he was to the "manner born," she gave rein to her pride in him and comforted herself by the thought that but for her own ministrations he would in all probability have been in his grave. She thought, also, of his unbrave attempt at suicide which made her shudder even yet in remembrance, of his extreme weakness when she had ministered to him in the old mill, of the gradual return to health by the few days in those delightful woods. He had already renewed some of the ambitions of his college days, and in these things she rejoiced. He also had given her

praise no less for her helpfulness than for her purity of purpose. But when did ever man love woman for pure gratitude? When did he ever love woman simply because she was willing to give herself to him? He could not know that her love had been her life, that since she had been a girl in her teens he had been her idol, and it was the effect of his going away without a word in the university days which had made her take the mad step of consenting to the addresses of a comparative stranger, a polished rogue, but with the address and persuasive powers of a prince. How fortunate it had been that he, the brute, as Clarence called him, had unwittingly revealed himself in his true character by trying to accomplish his designs to obtain her little property, and had found the girl in her teens too sharp for his maneuvers. He had then fled from her, and eventually had rushed to his death; for they had heard that the accident to the automobile had ended his life. Of course, Bartruff's friendship for her had been renewed when he took that business trip in her interest, and as fate would have it, in his own; but at that time neither knew the heart of the other. It is not the first time that two human souls, from an over-refinement of feeling and over-sensitiveness about pecuniary possibilities, have in life totally missed each other, for Clarence, through all, had sought nothing for himself and, like Lambert Strether in the Ambassadors, ever seeking little for himself, his very unselfishness had been his

supreme egotism. She had learned all this in their forest sojourn, but now all that was past and gone. That Clarence was still just a little more the brother than the lover and took a good deal for granted, was very true but it should not be forever. If he had grown a little away from her, he should be brought back and on her own part there should be no consent to a marriage until the summer was over. The item "no married men need apply," would be excuse enough. She would consider that they had settled down on that for the present and would both take what advantage they could of the summer school; she would assume her own garb before another day was over, although she had no other than the thin white dress and its accompaniments. She would first tell Mrs. Colin the whole story.

Before the end of these reflections, she was arrested in thought by a new voice and a refined one, in that outer circle. She could not see this person, but it might be the Edmund Holmes whom they spoke of as often coming to dine with them. She became a listener again, from her hiding place, and was arrested in her cogitations by his words. Further, Mr. Raines introduced the subject under consideration. The talk this evening was upon the subject of "University Farmers, or Creating an Aristocracy of the Soil." Mr. Edmund Holmes had a paper on this subject, reading with clear tone and fine enunciation, "Farming as a Profession."

"American farming of the advanced type is no longer a simple industry. It has gained the dignity of a science.

"The age of 'hit or miss' farming has passed away. The period also has passed, when, the farmer rising with the sun, and toiling all day under its direct rays, might naturally fear that he would have to be consigned to the Tophet of the Overworked.

"He cannot, of course, expect to be a scientific farmer merely and only from his books, but he can be the 'wireless operator,' whose station is his study-desk where come the messages from earth and air, fraught with meanings which men are only just beginning to comprehend in more than theory. Theory is good in its place but it cannot do all.

"As one philosopher has remarked in reference to this vital subject, 'Theory and Practice make the best farm team for the cultivation of the farmer's acres.'

"To the farmer scientist who studies his theme from the foundation, who tirelessly studies soils, minerals, climate, nicety of adaptation, there comes the very poetry and romance of his calling. Here are the wonderful mysteries of nature in her processes of reproduction. The 'Great God Pan' looks with favor upon those human beings who study nature's mysteries with a reverent mind, and things are revealed that are hidden from other mortals. Gradually he almost comes to believe that the globe itself is sentient in every part, from center to circumference, that even the smallest plant which springs from its earth-mother is born with almost human characteristics.

"And this is not pantheism in the common acceptance of that term, but the common-sense religion of

nature. The professor of agriculture can trace the loves, the hates, the affinities and the antagonisms of the plant brotherhood, the idiosyncracies of being, the obedience to certain laws, that seem also to govern the animal world all the way up to the human. He may also note with a great consciousness of the truth, that he is, day by day, climbing up that marvelous stair which, while it may begin among the caves and depths of the earth, does not stop short of that upper realm of mystery which leads to a grander conception of the divine purpose, and a belief in that great superintendence over the most insignificant of His creatures, which no reverent soul can doubt.

"The scientific farmer of the present day knows that he must become an adept even in the prosaic matter of stock raising. He must go deeper than to hold this question merely one of profit and loss, although that question too is one of the necessary ones, but he has to study even here, all the adaptations. He is surprised more and more by the way that the earth-mother draws back again and again the life blood that has been expended in growth, even the surplus and refuse of plant, animal and mineral, drawing them back again to her own bosom. She needs this sustenance. She makes them

Suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange

and then be sent back in rich purified form, through all the range of grass and flower and tree and here she demands the aid of man and of his plans to re-new wasting soil and conditions.

"We may see in results what Cornell is doing.

And many colleges, especially in the West, are vying with one another in their departments for the study of agriculture.

"As the ancients crowned the plow with flowers and honor we are chaining knowledge to the plow. The outcome is likely to be the best results of time at the service of the farmer, or we ought to say, husbandman, for the farmer is the husband of the peoples.

"Nearly everyone who has made a study of this subject knows how necessary it is to increase food supplies to meet the needs of our rapidly increasing population.

"When this thought is fully realized there will be less said about the high cost of living, for the fruits of the earth will be enough for all.

"But although farmers as a class are willing to be helped, they don't wish to be coddled. They are too self-respecting. The well known 'Banker's Association' is something which they would be glad to know more about, for that is to-day one of the movements which seems likely to be of real benefit to the farmer who wishes to avail himself of it. This association will furnish money at a low rate of interest, and long payments, to all those who apply, if they agree to devote themselves, understandingly, to the profession of farming as an occupation.

"Some of the drawbacks to farmers at the present hour may be noted in brief with the encouraging thought that many of the drawbacks are being gradually eliminated.

"1st. Excessive taxation to be remedied by the State.

"2nd. Expenses attendant upon the fitting of the soil, erection of buildings, etc., a handicap to beginners.

"3d. The notion on the part of the farmer as to the lowering influence of manual labor, involving social conditions.

"4th. Problem of reliable help, indisposition of laboring people to work on the soil."

"There has been such an awakening recently," said Mr. Raines, "on the subject of the conservation of our national health, and in fact all kindred subjects that the President of the United States, several years ago, called a conference of the Governors of every state, to meet in Washington, and also many other distinguished men with them who are noted in the literary, the scientific and the commercial world, to discover ways and means for the benefit of the race. It is to be hoped that this conference may have lasting results not only in our own generation, but also in generations to come. Many of our greatest minds are interested. It is a wonderful movement and shows the wisdom of our legislators for in meeting for conference from every state in the Union the industries of one locality can better be understood by other localities, farming interests also may be given an impulse from which they will take on new dignity.

"Have you been interested in such subjects, Mr. Bartruff?" asked Mr. Raines, turning to him with a pleasant inquiry, the beauty of this home conference being that there was room for all shades

of opinion and an opportunity for every voice to be heard.

"Wonderfully interested," he replied, "and grateful for this opportunity. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to avail myself of the privilege of studying the various interests of different communities both farming and mercantile in such schools as are now proposed. We may do so to great advantage. In fact, it has seemed to me that those who devote themselves to the law, which I had thought to make my own profession, are apt to grow in a circle not enough broadened out to understand world principles."

"A new spirit seems to have taken possession of the country of late," continued Mr. Raines. "A movement unheard of until now has been started by a certain university, and wealthy men are even loaning estates to train students in agriculture. An agricultural guild is about to be established. It aims to supplement without duplicating the work of the agricultural colleges by giving the practical work which their limited equipment and different purpose prevents them from providing. The students will be permitted to work on these practical farms and will receive such wages as comport with their work, deducting a small portion for the expense of tuition. At graduation each student will receive a lump sum of two hundred dollars. This college was founded by a certain moneyed man, and has been wonderfully successful. The guild will have a daily paper and has the promise of a

great number of subscribers. Here, too, will be an opportunity for some budding genius of the pen to gain the notice of the public in another line of work."

Some discussion of the work followed, mostly between the others, but in which Clarence very ably but modestly joined, making Eleanor more and more proud of him as she listened to every word, but with a new impulse to make a change of tactics as well as of dress, she remained as quiet as a mouse in her boy's retreat. In the discussion following other works of the kind were mentioned.

After a little further talk, they separated for the night, and the next day being the Sabbath, the farm work would cease and each member could enjoy nature in his own way. After the household were all asleep, Eleanor heard the signal at the window, but according to her new tactics, she did not respond. How hard it was not to do so, she only knew. Just once to feel the warm clasp of his hand. Again and again there was the sign of the pebble against her window and the whispered call, but firm to her purpose, she did not respond. Finally he went slowly and reluctantly away. Eleanor slept but little that night. The future stood out before her with a vividness which had never before been experienced. She realized that in the world's code she would probably be considered an outlaw, for they could not know the beautiful, strong nature of her lover, nor the fact that he would not even consent to her being there

with him, without the nominal guardianship of his friend Nolan and his wife, who had proved themselves friends indeed.

CHAPTER IV

When Eleanor opened her eyes in the little room the next morning, which was a Sabbath day more beautiful than she had ever seen, the rising sun shone through the honeysuckle, and also lighted up the windows of the farther building which they called the dormitory, and where many students from the college of agriculture near by had their rooms,—filled to overflowing during the harvest months. To her, those sparkling windows meant cheer and brightness, for she now saw a way out of her difficulty, that is: if she could only get Mrs. Colin's attention long enough to assure her that she was not what she appeared to be.

She could see that all the family were making preparations to attend church. As the church was distant some miles, they seemed to be getting ready the family carriage, and also the automobile. Children and grown people, all attended.

Just after Mrs. Colin was dressed, while the carriage was waiting for her, she looked into the little room for a morning greeting. "You are better this morning, dear? I was sure you would be. I have told Clarence to come in and keep house for us until we return. You and he must get your own breakfast. The table is set and the garden is full of luscious fruit. Help yourselves.

The servants, too, have gone to their own church and will not be home till evening. Now I must hurry. They are calling me."

When would there ever be a chance to tell her? Eleanor no sooner had heard the sound of the carriage wheels grow faint at the turn of the gate, the entrance to the grounds, than she sprang up, and taking her one beloved dress and its belongings, also her white shoes now as clean as willing hands could make them, and her embroidered stockings, she gave herself the luxury of a scented bath, and donned the robes, wondering the while how she could ever have thought it possible that the apparent change of sex should not have eventually had its effect upon the masculine nature, and she also realized how the very incongruity of the situation had withheld her from even permitting those caresses and those arrangements about future possibilities, which were the natural concomitants of the situation. Now, when looking in the glass, she could perceive that added beauty which the open air had given her and, also, the added earnestness of nature, for the emotional always refines, and there was a look about her eyes now which she had never noticed before. A depth, a darkness, a luster, which she hoped would not leave her as the days passed.

She heard Clarence's step in the hall. He knew that they were left alone, no doubt. As it was the fashion of the country, the front door stood invitingly open. He stepped back a little when he

saw a lady tripping down the stairs, and she had to speak and call him by name before he could believe his senses.

"Eleanor, can it be possible, Eleanor?"

He caught her in his arms. It was certainly a lover's embrace which greeted her now. They went out to the little arbor seat, and his admiring glances followed her every movement. She was supremely conscious of it.

"Eleanor, I went to your window last night, but I couldn't make you hear."

"I heard you, Clarence, but didn't think it best to respond."

"Cruel girl! Why?"

"I became afraid that there might be prying eyes. Besides I had fully resolved not to see you. This plan of dressing was in my mind, only I thought I should have a chance to talk with Mrs. Colin first. But although I did not get that opportunity this morning, I shall have it by a personal talk with her as soon as she comes home."

"Well, I don't know but you are right, but the only thing I regret is the fact that our little tête-à-têtes in the garden will have to come to an end."

"Perhaps it is better so," said Eleanor, gravely.

"Ah, nonsense! We will, of course, tell her at once that we are engaged."

"I think that might have to depend on circumstances. I think that while you are attending some of the lectures, and bending your energies to the work of the farm and the farm school, I will

offer my services as the preceptress of the little girls, for I overheard them, in family council, wondering where it would be possible to find someone who would begin to instruct them in languages — French and Italian. You know I could do that, for before Mother died we lived three years in Paris, that was a part of my life that you never knew.”

“But, Eleanor, dearest, what is to become of our plan? The little house in the country, the goal of all our wanderings, our marriage, our life together?”

“All in good time, Clarence,” she said with a smile, and a return of the caress, “but I can see that you are happy here, and so am I. This is an ideal American home. To think that our strange experience should have led us into this haven at last! The flood and the ‘drowning’ was the excuse for our flitting, but now we will not be married —”

“Eleanor! Eleanor!”

“Until autumn, I was about to say,” and her natural laughter showed that her heart was in the right place, so their talk soon drifted into other channels, he admiring every motion of her lips, she rejoicing in the return of his admiration. Most probably he had never been conscious of any diminution or change, but it might, it certainly would have grown upon him. As there was a little rain from a passing cloud, they adjourned to the house. She played for him on the grand piano. It seemed

like heaven to touch the keys again, and it certainly seemed heaven for him to listen. They went back to the piazza after a while, and indulged in reminiscent talk. They referred to the report read from the city paper the night after they came.

"I could not help noticing the blush deepen on your cheek, my Norrie, and I think Mrs. Colin did, too."

"It was so strange," she answered, "to hear one's own obituary read, but in the autumn they will learn that we are not dead, but only — only married."

He laughed at her returning merry brightness and after much deliberation finally settled down on Eleanor's plan to remain there, busy and earning what they could, and learning what they could, until autumn and then,—but it was this time Eleanor's own insistence and not his wish to delay. All the old fervor seemed to have returned and Eleanor was the happiest of the happy in consequence of his changed mood. He was indeed the lover once more, and the rich color of both showed how the woods sojourn had beautified and healed.

They were just beginning to watch for the sound of carriage wheels when all at once the door at the end of the hall opened and Mrs. Colin entered. They had waited for just a minute too long. She had taken a short cut through the garden, and entered by the back door, meeting Eleanor full in the face, but not recognizing her at first. Clar-

ence sprang to her side, in order to be ready with the explanations that must follow. After a moment or two of scrutiny, she smiled and said:

"You need not make any explanations, you two. I've suspected it for the last twenty-four hours, and now I'm sure. You're the two young people that deluded the people of the razed city into thinking one of you had fallen into the river to save the other, and that you both were drowned, and you had the pleasure of reading your own obituary notices in last night's paper. I said to my father, 'Norrie is no boy. He's a girl, and a mighty handsome girl, too, and you see if I'm not right.'"

Mrs. Colin looked very searchingly into the face of this beautiful girl. Eleanor answered her earnest glance.

"Oh, I have wanted so to tell you. Indeed it is true. You have guessed right, dear Mrs. Colin. I shall tell you the whole story some day. I will only tell you, now, that I found him exhausted,—but how can I ever thank you that you understood me?"

"Really, I couldn't have asked anyone to be more circumspect, nor better behaved," she said smiling. "Why, as a boy, Norrie, you have made friends in two days with everybody, even to the pets about the farm, and you, Clarence, I should like to adopt you."

She took a hand of each and joined them together. "I am just as proud as I can be of both

of you. And now, I'll tell you what we'll do. I will explain to the girls. They love you, dear. Our young minister, Edmund Holmes, is coming to dinner. His mother is also to be our guest, but Father is taking her for a drive. I hurried in while they were putting out the horses, and that was fortunate, for as you are my guests, you two, it is just as well for me to understand the situation. We will have no time to talk now, but Mr. Holmes was talking to me on the way home about the catastrophe, and was all sympathy about the two young people who went down to their death in the flood. I told him that I had my suspicions that they were very much alive."

"Oh, but we never meant to deceive people," said both at once. "I was so very ill when Eleanor found me that, in common charity she couldn't leave me."

"I know. I understand. Sometimes people ought to be frightened to death before they ever think to give a helping hand to their fellow men. I daresay that you two poor things never could have married if you'd had to please everybody and overcome all the obstacles."

"That is the very truth," said Clarence fervently, but laughing in response to her own pleasantry.

"I wanted so much to tell you the very moment we came, but there was no opportunity."

"It is just as well, I seemed at once to read your heart and to know the sweet depth of your

nature, but tell me this,— are you really engaged to Clarence? Do you love one another?”

“We *do* love one another,” spoke Clarence fervently, “and hope to be married; but after our arrival here, we wished to earn a little means to live on, and found that we were tied by the rule ‘No married persons need apply,’ so we have decided to put off our marriage until the autumn and to attend the lectures and classes, if you will permit us to stay on here and help, the same as the others.”

“Indeed you shall, my dears, you shall stay, not with the helpers on the farm, but right here as my guests.”

“Dear Mrs. Colin,” bravely suggested Eleanor, “thank you a million times! I heard you wishing to have someone as governess for the children. If you would allow me, I could help in such a position, for I have studied several years abroad. I could teach them both French and Italian.”

“Why, that would be delightful!” Mrs. Colin caught both Eleanor’s hands in a quick response. “It relieves my mind of a great burden. But now I hear wheels; the people will soon be coming. One thing more. Do you wish your engagement to be known?”

“Certainly,” said Clarence, “at once.”

“Oh, I would rather wait,” whispered Eleanor under her breath.

“It shall be just as you say, then. I will explain to the others, only the little that we need to

explain — that you were both saved from death in the flood, and that you are my friends. You just keep the pretty dress on, Norrie. It is very becoming and in the afternoon, after we have had the good dinner which you helped to prepare, we'll end up with a reception. Now 'scoot!' The men are coming in. I'll tell them all the news, and our plans later; or on the other hand, I may not tell them at all."

As steps were heard in the hall, the two passed out at the opposite door into the garden which now seemed to them a veritable garden of Eden.

The very first thing Mrs. Colin did, was to whisper to her husband as soon as he stepped over the threshold, after the guests and the children had entered.

"My surmises are right. My little sick boy is Miss Norwood. Please don't say anything as yet in explanation to Mr. Holmes, Robert, and keep your own counsel all around. Both are victims of the fire and flood. I shall explain everything to Father and the girls. I shall teach them to love her still more. I have invited them both to be our guests."

"Just like you, Grace. You believe in everybody and always give everyone a chance. You are just a darling, yourself; you make me your constant lover."

"Why, she is beautiful!" Mrs. Colin continued, heedless of his praise of herself. "I have sent them both out into the garden to stay there until

we call them to dinner. You take care of Edmund Holmes, Robert, and send the little girls to my room. I have only heard a little of their story as yet, but they are good and pure and true. That I know. Now, send the girls to me. Dear Papa doesn't look as if he were suffering overmuch. See, over there." A glance showed that the two older lovers were off for a drive.

"May we keep on our white dresses, Mamma?" the children shouted from the stair foot.

"Yes, until after dinner, then if you want to play in the sand, you may change and put on your blue ones, and take your shoes off."

"Oh, jolly!"

She went upstairs to the nursery with them to see to their outdoor garments, as was her custom. "Now, come on Mother's lap a minute. I want to tell you a story."

They sprang eagerly to her side; the younger, Mary, on her knee.

"Did you hear us talking the other day about a great flood when a bridge was swept away?"

"Oh, yes, over in the city. All the papers have been so full of it."

"Well, there were two people there that night who fell in the water."

"And were swept away?"

"Almost. People all think they were drowned in the river. The man was nearly drowned, and the girl who heard people shouting that he was dead, ran along the river bank and found him."

"Dead?"

"No, but very nearly. She ran back to get help, but could not get any, so many houses had been blown down, so she found a boy's suit — her brother's — and ran down to the river where she had left him for almost dead, and she could not get anyone to help her, for the city was almost deserted, but they were down on the slate stones near the river and she kindled a little fire there."

"But how did she get any matches?" said practical Anna.

"I cannot tell, but she made a little fire and heated the slate stones and placed them over his heart and all around him, and so he —"

"And so he got better?"

"Yes, after awhile, but he was very weak and neither of them had any money and they had to earn some and they happened to see Grandpere's advertisement for farmer's boys, and so they came here."

"Where are they?" said Mary, jumping down off her mother's knee in her excitement.

"Come to the window and you can see them in the arbor."

"That is only Clarence and — and a girl! Who is that girl, Mamma?"

"That is Miss Eleanor Norwood."

"Why, her face looks like Norrie's."

"Yes, it is really Norrie. Norrie was the one who had to wear a boy's suit."

"Doesn't she look tall and beautiful?"

"I liked her a great deal better when she was the boy," said Anna, the practical.

"So did I!" echoed Mary.

"And can't we call her 'Norrie' any more?"

"No, but you may love her just the same, or a thousand times more, for she is going to be your dear teacher. She and Mr. Bartruff, and Mr. Holmes and his mother, if she and the Grandpere get back, are going to dine with us to-day, and my little girls may set the table now for me. Set places for four more people, you know."

"Ah, yes, for Mr. Holmes and Clarence and — and that lady — and Mrs. Holmes. May we call Norrie 'Eleanor' now, Mamma?" asked Anna.

"Miss Eleanor, or Miss Norwood, and you will try to be very nice and respectful to her. She will tell you beautiful stories."

"About bears?" asked Mary.

"More likely about birds."

"And children and flowers," said Anna.

"When she was a boy she told us such a dear little story about a squirrel," said Mary. "May we tell Grandpere all about it?"

"Everything, dears. But he is away just now. He and Mamma Holmes have gone for a drive. Now run away, for I must attend to my guests."

"If Mr. Edmund Holmes is with your father, children, do not say a word, for you see he does not know yet, but sit very still until Papa is alone and then you may tell him, and by and by you may run out in the arbor with Mr. Clarence and

Miss Eleanor, and come in with them when I call you to dinner."

"Thank you, Mamma, we'll be awfully good."

While they were busy telling in their graphic way the story to Mr. Colin, he having had a whispered word before, from his wife, Clarence and Eleanor were talking over the events of the morning, in their sheltered arbor seat. Never was there a more beautiful day. "The bridal of the earth and sky."

"I cannot see any reason why we might not be married at once, Eleanor," said Clarence. He was indeed the ardent lover now. How could she ever have doubted! The assurance gave her new brightness and beauty.

"Would you have me go to the altar without so much as a wedding dress?"

"You could have none more beautiful than this, and let me make a request, darling, that you wear no other than this on that occasion, whenever it may be."

She could but notice the difference between the present fervor, and the matter of fact brotherly interest of a few days ago, and rejoiced in the power she had developed, but wisely kept her own counsel, and was still entirely firm about the plan of studying and waiting, thinking within herself: Woman must never, never unsex herself, even in the matter of garments. We live in a world of imagination, and qualities of soul are ascribed or withdrawn according to the cut of our clothes.

Nor on the other hand must we ever try to seek to awake love by awakening a feeling of gratitude in the man-soul for any life-saving benefits conferred. Love goes and comes wherever he listeth, and that it has come to me once for all, before it flew away forever, is the secret of my intense happiness to-day.

The little girls came running out to tell them to come to dinner and with some misgivings, Eleanor came into the dining room. She did not know how much the family knew of her history, but Mrs. Colin had proved herself a wise as well as a gracious hostess. The two friends were not seated together.

Edmund Holmes had the seat at Mrs. Colin's right hand and to her utter surprise, Eleanor herself was placed beside Mr. Colin. Mr. Raines had not yet returned from that drive. At this mark of appreciation, she would have had difficulty in restraining the tears of gladness, but that her wonderful self-control came to her aid, and her modesty did not interfere with her fine, but restrained conversational powers. At once, she recognized the cultivated tone of the other guest, as the one which had once been heard at the home club, the evening previous, and thought how pleased Clarence would be, for here was one who could appreciate his gifts and give him the pleasure of companionship.

"We usually let our servants have the greater part of the Sabbath for their visiting day," said

Mrs. Colin, after a while, "and so my little daughters will be our helpers, and we love now and then to have just the simple meal of our earlier days. A 'course' dinner would be out of the question, when one travels three miles to church."

"Delightful!" said Mr. Holmes, as he was helped to some of the appetizing dishes before him. "I think it would be well to go back to the earlier times in many social customs. We are so apt to become wrapped about with formality and forget that we are sisters and brothers. *This is home!*"

"In the matter of church attendance, also, there might well be a change to the older time," said Mr. Colin. "What with Sunday newspapers, Sunday excursions, and various other Sunday fêtes, there is really no Sabbath any more. I remember hearing of a Scottish lady who with her family of children used to walk nine miles to church and, taking a luncheon along for her children, waited for the two services and then walked the nine miles back."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said the minister. "What energy! What spirituality! It is no doubt one secret of Scotland's greatness that she had such sons and daughters. These were no doubt the children of the covenanters who used to hear the angels singing with them in the air."

"No doubt the echoes of the hills," said the more practical Mr. Colin.

"I am not sure of that," said Edmund Holmes, reverently. "There are more things in heaven

and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

The little girls had no awe of the minister, but were ready to listen to his delightful table-talk, and with a sympathetic look now and then, from the mother's eyes to them, they listened in modest silence. Chatty enough they were at other times in the family, and now to the Miss Norwood, so suddenly transformed. They were, indeed, the pets of their grandfather. With a delicacy seldom noticed in others, Mrs. Colin had never bade them call him "Grandfather." It was usually some playful pet name of their own invention, and the less severe "Grandpere," which did not so baldly signify in its expression, "your years are numbered." Eleanor had noticed this extreme delicacy and sensibility in her hostess, and saw it reflected again in these little daughters, who were being brought up without excessive restraint, knowing the very natural happiness of childhood in all their acts and impulses.

"I may tell you a little secret," said Mrs. Colin as they left the table; "'Mamma Holmes,' as we familiarly call her,—Edmund's mother, will soon be one of us, for she and my father have concluded to cast in their lot together."

"Oh, how nice for the Grandpere, who would not then be left alone when you all go to the city."

"Yes, I have thought of that. They have always been friends. They have the same literary

tastes, and as Edmund must soon be going out into the world for himself, she, too, would have been left alone. His gifts are such that a larger sphere will soon be opening to him, and then would come separation. Thank heaven, that I have daughters and not sons, for my daughters may not need to go out into the world as sons do, sooner or later, and break people's hearts by separation."

"There must be a special bond between that mother and son. What delightful people you have gathered about you, dear Mrs. Colin! That first evening when I saw Mrs. Holmes here, in her pretty black velvet dress and laces, I thought she was the most beautiful lady I had ever seen, of her years. When was silvered hair ever so fine and soft as hers?"

"She is gifted, too. An author of note; but, better than that, one interested in the humanities, and just as full of romance as a girl. Our little girls love her and she always has a word for them."

"Do they know?"

"In a general way, yes. Loving the Grandpere as they do, it seems the most natural thing in the world. To them, the only change will be that instead of 'Mamma Holmes,' it will only be 'Mamma Raines,'—such a name as 'Grand-mamma' will never occur to them, as it might have been had my own mother lived."

"They seem so delicately sensitive in all their

instincts," said Eleanor. "Never any reference to condition or circumstance in their gentle vocabulary. I had always observed that."

Eleanor recalled that first night of her stay under their hospitable roof, and of hearing the conversation between Mr. Raines and his daughter. There was no need to refer to it now, but it is needless to say that both parties had assumed a new interest in her eyes.

CHAPTER V

Seated at the bountiful table in their country residence, with these people who had, also, their elegant city home, and yet who among their rural friends, assumed no "airs" nor pretensions, Eleanor realized how both she and Clarence had been starved for companionship among their associates, for intellectually both were gifted, more than the dwellers on their native heath. Even the younger social set in which Eleanor had been queen was provincial in the extreme — the ultra-provincial, in fact, and to reside among the self-centered, one has not only to appear to be like them, but deftly to hide the fact that one is, very naturally, conscious of one's own powers, not of the other's defects. There must be a constant living down, a dwarfing of the mental nature in such a case, in order not to awaken antagonisms which are nothing more than jealousies, when sifted of all sophistical reasoning.

Under the peculiar circumstances, Eleanor did not take much part in their lively conversation, but with open mind and beaming countenance she proved to be the good listener who incites to ready conversational stimulation, and Mrs. Colin and Edmund Holmes were among the brightest she

had ever met, in their ready give and take of social amenities. She was proud of Clarence, too, as he beamed upon her from the farther side of the table. That he was care-free and happy showed itself in every line of his face, and often in that engaging smile which she loved so well.

Over the coffee-cups they sat until the beautiful Sabbath daylight merged into the evening glow, for there was nothing to bid them hasten. No evening engagements, and nothing to mar the luxury of friendly feeling and interchange and interplay of sentiment, not even the thought of waiting people below stairs.

A new book had just come out, written by an English author who had gained an audience of readers, a limited one, perhaps. It had been recommended among the "best sellers," and had been received with rather more *éclat* than it deserved. Mrs. Colin had just finished it and was rather charmed by certain traits represented in the description of some of its characters.

"I must say that it totally disappointed me," said Edmund. "Anticipation, no doubt, is much more than half the secret of enjoyment of a book or a dinner, but if the latter should have been spoiled by some disliked condiment, which is never the case at this table"—a smile of appreciation flashed to the hostess—"there is naturally disappointment."

"I had something of that feeling, too, in reading it," said Mr. Colin. "I should prefer a

'bad' book, so-called, rather than a coarse book, for the bad book can be discarded at once, but the one, half and half, is not so easy to cast aside."

"I can hardly understand the motive of the author," continued Edmund, "for there are some passages of the most exquisite pathos, and some of beautiful tenderness, and some of sublime reaches of thought, which, taken apart from the rest, are most inspiring, but on turning over a page, one is confronted by a certain coarseness of expression which destroys everything else. To a refined mind, an aristocracy of letters is visible in some authors, a dignity of expression, and certain words themselves, independent of their surroundings, minister to the delight of the written page."

"And you find a lack of refinement there?" said Mr. Colin.

"Oh, most decidedly! And unfortunately in too many of our modern books."

After Edmund Holmes had said good-night, and the servants had returned from their outing to relieve the house-mistress, who loved to spend this quiet hour with her little girls, Clarence and Eleanor went down the garden walk together to the little arbor where their last night's supper had been laid.

"Hasn't it been a most wonderful day, Eleanor?"

"One of the most wonderful, and the happiest," she beamed.

"I do believe that in our intellectual life we have been starved," he continued. "We may now begin to live."

Again his arm stole about her slim waist, and again he took the kiss which was his right to have — not, as she realized to her own heart's tumult, the mere kiss of a brother, now, but of a lover who had never loved any other woman.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Colin was with her children. She was not one of the mothers who, to save themselves trouble, would insist on thrusting them into a dark room and ordering them to go to sleep or be punished for the natural rebellion which every healthy child would be likely to show by the terrors of isolation. This was one of her happiest hours, as it was theirs, also, and it was here that she had gained her hold upon them.

"Miss Eleanor will tell us how to do our examples, Mamma, and all our lessons; and I thought she would walk with us to-morrow," they said to their mother.

"Well, no doubt she will be glad to do that, and after she is married to Clarence in the autumn, she may be willing to stay until winter, and teach you French and Italian; but of that I am not certain yet."

"We can't call her 'Norrie' any more, can we, Mamma?"

"I would rather you wouldn't. Always call her Miss Eleanor, dears. 'Norrie' was only a

pet name for 'Norlean,' which is Eleanor spelled partly backwards."

Mrs. Colin sent for a dressmaker the next day, and Eleanor was fitted for some simple, pretty gowns made in the ruling mode, and adapted to her delicate beauty. Clarence wondered, when he saw her in her own dainty garments, how he ever could have consented to see her in boy's costume, so beautiful did she now appear to his newly-opened eyes.

It probably did not make her any less so to him that young Mr. Holmes could not help casting many an admiring glance in her direction. They had had a most delightful Sabbath afternoon the previous Sabbath, many of the deepest subjects of our human nature being touched upon and also many things of the spirit and the spiritual world. There was a bright interchange of wit and repartee also, for Mrs. Colin had the rare gift of knowing how to bring out the best in others. Mr. Raines' talks in the library afterward might have been a little heavy for the brightness of the day, but the Grandpere always had something of interest to say, and while the young people listened with deference, the still younger people had been taught to keep a respectful silence while their elders conversed. There being no servants' table to come afterward, there was no hastening of the guests because a servant's patient lot might appear through the dim glass of the dining-room door. All was repose and de-

light in the higher intellectual life, and in perfect companionship. Thus the second Sabbath following the confessional one had worn into the evening, and later all adjourned to the cool piazza and watched the stars come up in the sky and the darkness descend.

Clarence and Eleanor now found the days a dream of delight. Under no restraint of silence now, they could talk freely to both host and hostess. An entirely new wardrobe had been purchased for "Norrie," and "He" had become a thing of the past. Preparations were being made for their marriage, but with moderation, for the autumn work of the farm was always exacting, and they had agreed to make no break until some of this excess of work had been accomplished. This concession they owed to their host and hostess, who had given them a home and love and the dear, caressing consideration which proved to be a mental tonic to both. However, they saw less of each other, now that the summer's work was culminating, the fruits of the earth were being gathered into the storehouse and barn, but at the evening receptions in the library they met. They could sit side by side and drink in the wisdom of those who had made a deep study of higher things.

It was Eleanor's duty and pleasure now to be the preceptress of the two little girls in their first steps in a language series which included another language than their own. She was very profi-

cient herself in such studies, and she had the knack, so seldom acquired by any but a natural teacher, of leading her pupils along without that weariness to the flesh which little people so often resent. There was none of this, for she interested them from the start. If the study was botany, she went joyously with them to the woods and fields; if it was astronomy, she was beside them there, filled with that deep religious awe with which they studied the starry heavens and felt the immensity of space. But they were taught to feel no awe of that strange, starry world.

In short, Eleanor was a teacher after Mrs. Colin's own heart, and that lady often found herself regretting that so soon she would flit to a home of her own; but so much did Eleanor like the work, that she assured her friend that house-keeping might possibly be less her forte than teaching, and that all relations need not cease between them merely because she had the little home in the country, "far from the madding crowd."

Sometimes Mrs. Colin joined them in their field excursions in search of plants and birds, and a lasting friendship was cemented between these two women.

One afternoon, when lessons in the field were all finished and they were told that a play time awaited them, they ran ahead with laughter and shout, and the two ladies lingered, walking lei-

surely homeward, each giving the history of some of the earlier days of their girlhood, and their intimacy grew apace. But it was founded on mutual esteem and mutual understanding, and not merely on the fact of mere proximity which is the basis of so many girlish friendships. Eleanor confided to her her own condition as one who had virtually relinquished a fortune and also an enviable place in such society as their city afforded for that forest idyl which had certainly saved one life and enlarged her own, and told her of the desire she had felt to enter the literary market, to find a place in the magazines, and of the extreme difficulty of such a course, since there was no tribunal to which one could appeal, except, possibly, some tired and disgusted editor or his helper, so that a young writer soon settles back in complete indifference to letters. Disappointments are so general as to the output of the majority of publishers, so much of the sensational, so much of the erotic and so little that is mental food, that one exclaims: "What's the use?" and effort is paralyzed.

"I can agree with you in this — it is true we have a few writers who live," said Mrs. Colin, "but the books I have enjoyed most of late — books that I should like to collect and to give to friends as gifts — when you send for them, lo! they are out of print, and you are recommended to some silly collection of words by some author who thinks that 'mere words with heart and soul

left out, are animate and breathing.' But, Eleanor, dear, I have heard that the members of the Saturday evening club expressed their desire to have you take up one of the evenings with an original story. Can you not do that? Can you not do it soon? "

"I think possibly I might have the courage."

"Only our own little circle, you know, with the exception of Edmund Holmes and his mother, who have asked to be allowed the privilege of the Saturday evening talks, and so far as he is concerned, he has been told that he is more than welcome, also to be with us on Sabbath afternoons as well. I think Clarence likes him."

"Oh, very much. It has been an inspiration to us all to listen to him, both in the pulpit and out of it, and to listen with all our minds when he and the Grandpere get talking about deep subjects."

A few days later, Clarence rushed in with a big piece of news. "I have the best kind of a compliment for you, Eleanor, from the president of our society,— Mr. Raines. He has just informed me that one of your stories has been accepted by one of the leading magazines."

"Mine? My very own? "

"Yes, Norrie, your very own."

"How kind of him! "

"Probably its worth may have had something to do with the acceptance of the story," he replied sarcastically.

"Very little, Clarence, for it is only an extension of the one I sent three years ago, and had the polite reminder by return mail, 'Longfellow wrote, years ago, on that same subject. You cannot expect to excel him!' So crushed was I that I never even dared to tell you in those days, few and far between, when you chanced to call; but now, oh joy! to have a friend at court! such a friend as Mr. Raines, who, in common speech, 'knows the ropes.' I am very happy over it. Did he tell you how much of a 'send off' he gave me to the editor?"

"I cannot remember his exact words."

It was a great delight, now, to both Eleanor and Clarence to meet in the library on Saturday evenings with the others, and very often some glance or some clasp of the hand at parting reassured Eleanor that she had gained absolute sway over one heart at least. These evenings were now augmented by several new members of the guild, and the library was more than filled. Edmund Holmes, the minister, was one of the constant members, and frequently some thought from him arrested the attention even of the older members. While the subjects were most frequently something pertaining to agriculture or scientific methods of bringing out the best results from the soil, there was a large scope for individual thought and expression. There was also a call for a talk from one and another on some specialized subject. From Clarence there was an evening study of the

Constitution of the United States, and matters pertaining to politics and law. From Mr. Holmes, something from the classics and almost every time a glance at the book reviews and a sympathetic expression of good will to those living authors who minister most to the intellectual needs of man.

On the evening previous to this, Wordsworth came in for the purpose of illustration, and like a flash, when the poem "To Sleep" was read, Clarence and Eleanor glanced at each other, noting the same. It was indeed the poem of their woodland solitude. Other sonnets were read by Mr. Holmes with very fine effect. And now Eleanor's turn came to give her talk or speech as a member of this home club — hitherto a silent member, now listened to with marked appreciation. She had chosen the real history of her parents' purchase of the little farm house — the probable Mecca of the present wanderers.

THE POETRY OF THE FARM

"There is plenty of talk just at the present time about 'world unrest,' 'nerve strain,' and various other designations for the restlessness of body and mind which seems, unfortunately, to have become a habit of the age. Possibly it is because this is an age of action, rather than of meditation, and the bipartite mind of man needs both for his full development. In the time of our parents and grandparents, great issues were at stake. The moral sense of the nation was kept alive by motives that were sublime in their pur-

pose, and heroic in their action. Slavery died its death, and probably at the time there was too much to do that was vital to leave any time for self-conscious introspections and grumblings. But for the fierce unrest of to-day there is certainly some remedy. To those who can command their time, there is a remedy which proves infallible, and to those who cannot command this commodity, imagination must do in place of reality, and the thought that some day in the near future their plans may meet with fruition. 'Back to the soil,' is the charmed command, and blessed are they who can obey, and take the classics with them.

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"Find an abandoned farm, and with it some old-fashioned house near the edge of a wood. The woody atmosphere is a necessity, for the soul needs companionship, and the unseen hamadryad spirits are wonderful soothers. Like the hand of a mother upon the fevered brow, these subtle spirits of the arboreal realm minister to the mind diseased, and the tyrant Care shrinks before them.

"When you have found your house with its honey-suckle-bordered porch, and its wild-rose arbor, growing in neglected profusion, pass on a few steps to the old barn, open the heavy swinging doors, and discover its century-old oak beams and rafters, and the empty hay-mows; its stables also empty, but waiting for occupants, the heavy stanchions suggesting the bovine conversational clicking of horns and munching of provender. You may not care to take upon your tired shoulders the burdens of agricultural life, and the stables may still remain empty, with the exception of one cool, clover-scented enclosure for your pet pony,

who will be part of your life there, and also your dog, his friend and companion as well as your own, free from chain and muzzle, free to bound over the hills at your side, across swamp, thicket, and meadow, startling the partridge from her nest, but by your warning finger arrested before the younglings are disturbed — coming back to your side with lolling tongue and questioning eyes, but satisfied that your wish is law.

“Take possession, if possible, in the month of June, when the wild vines run riot over vestibule, and doorway, and all the birds of the air sing a welcome. Renovate to your heart’s content. Fill the cobwebby corners with branches of balsam, hemlock, spruce and pine, also flowers from the woods and fields, but take care not to disturb the ancestral emotional atmosphere of the home.

“Remember the lovers who have lived within these four walls, the happy bride who has come there, children’s laughter and tears, love and care for the aged in their outlook upon a larger world than this; live over again their emotions in the refined and sympathetic atmosphere of your own deep sensibilities, and the very trees that shade your doorway will send out the voices of their hamadryad spirits with a message of peace to your soul.

“Then, on the practical side, if you are of a practical turn of mind, ask some neighboring farmer who may not have acquired much of a fortune in cultivating the stubborn soil, which has grown too many crops in successive rotation without renewal of nitrogen supplies — ask him to plow deep some field for you, and there grow such things as you may, especially

your own flowers and vegetables. Pay him well for his work, even if you are not rich yourself. Ready money is a boon in such localities; it was the lack of it, no doubt, which drove so many worthy people away from their farms a dozen years ago. You will find that a woodsman seldom overcharges. Meet him on his own ground, and never usurp dominion. You will find a loyal, upright American who asks no favors. A politician perhaps, but an educated one, who subscribes for the daily papers, who knows all about his country, who has, it may be, borne arms for it, who honors his President and stands by him loyally, even though all the city editors of opposition papers should unite in hounding him for the purpose of political warfare.

“To crown all, take your book or pen; or simply your own thoughts, and rest in the hammock under your own softly whispering aspen trees, your dog by your side, head on paws, one bright eye alert to study your movements and be ready to spring at your command; watch the lowering afternoon sun shimmering through the whispering leaves, listen to the robins, the orioles, blue birds, and bobolinks, the lowing of distant kine, the softened whetting of the scythe or rumble of the mowing machine, all the myriad sounds of nature in sparsely settled districts. After an hour of such restfulness as this, leave your books in the rustic seat — nothing will disturb them there — go to the spring of deliciously cool water that flows from the rock on the hillside — Fido will be there before you, making a circuit of miles in his rapture of gladness — drink of this nectar of the gods, breathe this ambrosial air, and you will surely find that what-

ever your troubles may have been in your city home, you will go back to it strengthened, healed and comforted. Heaven and earth will be yours, for you will know, as never before, that this is 'God's world.' "

The intellectual atmosphere was distinctly stimulating. Besides this there was the real sociability of refined minds. There was laughter and jest, and jolliness in general. Nuts and luscious country apples were in order, while another portion of the household, but a portion that received the countenance of all, demanded attention: the two well-bred cats and the stately shepherd dog, came softly in and without leave took their various positions. The cats, usually, where a gentle hand could reach over and stroke them, and the dog curled down close to the feet of Edmund Holmes, who was patting the dog's head and drawing the soft, silky ears through his fingers.

"How can anyone who looks into a dog's eyes, a dog with a soul, doubt that he has the same right to a future life that his human friends have?" said Edmund.

"I am so glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Colin, "for it has been a hobby with me. I recall some lines written by an unknown author, as follows:

"Oh, never lost is any spark or trace
Of love's compassion. They who watch and wait
In their magnetic circles at heaven's gate
May say, in spirit search through outer space

The soul of bird or beast passed by this way
And entrance meekly, wistfully besought.
But who for that mute soul hath ransom brought?
Then Love might answer. Love the marvel wrought
And made that soul immortal. *Bid it stay!*"

Mr. Raines was Clarence Bartruff's ideal of a gentleman of the old school; courteous, affable, ready to listen to the views of the younger men, to draw them out by deference to their opinions, and at the same time give them the benefit of his ripe experience. The library was the Mecca where all met and the old books which lined the shelves gave dignity to the room, while the rows on rows of well-worn newer books showed that they had been read and assimilated as well as looked at with the eye of a connoisseur.

Edmund liked nothing better than an hour's conversation with him, not as a prospective step-father, but as man to man, on scientific subjects, and also in lighter vein. At such times they had the range of the world and all space for their subjects, from the canals of Mars to the discovery of the Pole, from the flight of the aeronauts through space to the diamond dust of the tropics. When outside tasks were completed, then it was the signal for them all to gather in the library, the girls quiet and subdued when he spoke with the authority of the traveled man of the world, who had gone about with his eyes open.

They always enjoyed the desultory talks about

general subjects, after the usual lecture, for here they were all peers in the thought realm and younger and older gave their opinions with equal freedom. It did not detract from the interest of these occasions that the romance of love's beginnings and, in fact, love's perplexity, the autumn romance which some of them knew about, gave zest to everything that was said.

Two pairs of sharp little eyes often were observers of things which their elders did not notice, but which their mother heard when their time for disrobing came, for never could they sleep until the mother had seen them tucked in their beds, and had given them a good-night kiss.

"Isn't it funny, Mamma, that Mr. Holmes, our minister, always pays so much heed to every word Miss Eleanor says?" said Anna.

"And he isn't half as nice to us as he used to be. I like Mr. Clarence the best now," said Mary.

"Oh, you are jealous," said Anna, "isn't she, Mamma? She likes all the attention. Didn't you tell us that some day Mr. Clarence and Miss Eleanor are going to be married to each other?"

"Yes, but that is our secret. We must not speak of it to anyone."

"Not even to Grandpere?"

"Not just yet, you have already told him her story. I wish to see whether or not my little girls are trustworthy."

CHAPTER VI

Mrs. Colin and the girls and their teacher and friend, Eleanor, were enjoying their morning walk about the grounds and beside the stream, within the borders of the wood. On this day they found a delightful place where nature had made a sort of artificial palace. Walls of rock, layer after layer, reaching up to sheer heights on one side, and below them the peaceful, rippling stream with its border of trees, and carpeted with a wealth of running pine, and here was also an emerald grassy bank, inviting to rest and reposeful thought. In the distance they saw the two friends, Bartruff and Holmes, with coats off, playing their game afield.

Mrs. Colin was not in the least blind to the fact that Edmund enjoyed the society of Eleanor Norwood. He was not, indeed, to blame for enjoying the society of both ladies, for Mrs. Colin had that charm of manner which throws the halo of good feeling around every guest, and he had also good reason to think her perfection in her young matronhood, and her bright, laughing girls a welcome addition to the circle. It was in every way a delightful home, and the home life a fair expression of absolute belief in that blessed institution, but within the last few days, she had

wondered, especially since Edmund had taken up his whilom abode with them for a few weeks, his mother having been called to the city for a short space, how it chanced that Clarence himself should be blind. Is he so sure of her love that he has no fear of a rival, and is there no danger that the similarity of tastes between herself and the talented young preacher may disrupt the peace of this first coalition? Observing more closely, however, she came to the conclusion that Eleanor's love for Clarence was no ephemeral experience. She would be as true as steel, true as herself. Her sweet unconsciousness of her charms only added to them.

But this was one of the "picnic" days. They happened frequently.

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"What is the Mother thinking about?
Many wonderful things no doubt."

said Eleanor, playfully, after a long, dreamy reverie on Mrs. Colin's part, which she did not deem it at all necessary to explain, and as she at once turned her attention to the basket of edibles, all were ready to give attention. Taking the white cover from this basket, a most tempting luncheon was disclosed, and the little girls were the hostesses. How happy they were in displaying the good things in the most tempting array.

Hardly had they prepared the improvised table by spreading a white tablecloth over a large

flat boulder, when the other members of the immediate family circle appeared, walking in a leisurely manner toward them. It had been Mrs. Colin's happy plan to relieve the burden of house-keeping by such occasional outdoor feasts, and seldom did her maids find themselves overburdened with household duties for her guests. It was always "open house," but never an indifferent mistress, who would gratify herself at the expense of great additional labor to her willing domestics. Anna was the first to run and meet the Grandpere, while Mr. Colin and Clarence came up at an eager pace, Mary taking it upon herself, having met them in the road, to thrust her own little hand into one of the palms of both and lead them to the bower of greenery with the welcome sight to hungry men of the pretty table service laid out on the great broad rock all in readiness.

"But where is Mr. Holmes?" asked one of the girls.

"He found that one of the boys had been injured in a game of football,—not seriously, we hope, but the boy needed to be taken out of the crowd, and so he borrowed my auto to get him safely home," said Mr. Raines. "I hope there may be no serious injury. He will probably be here before many minutes."

Eleanor was dressed in white, and the soft curling locks of silken hair still lay in loose rings on her forehead, but were now put up in womanly fashion at the back, which added dignity. No

one but herself and Clarence knew why they had been shorn, but now they were regaining their natural appearance.

Mr. Holmes was at last seen, coming rapidly in the distance, striding through the underbrush of the wood in strong, leaping steps, in order not to be too late for the feast.

Clarence found time to say a word aside to Eleanor while she accompanied him to the spring in the rock to get the freshest, coolest water for this improvised feast.

"You look like a peach, Norrie. If any of the home people should see you now they wouldn't know you. You are beautiful! How strange that we have both slipped out of existence to the home crowd. It's rather humbling to one's pride."

She had no time to reply to him, for they were within earshot of the others.

"How perfectly heavenly!" someone exclaimed.

"Heavenly in more senses than one," Clarence echoed in his rapid approach.

"We can almost hear the angels singing in the air," said Anna.

"Ever since Mr. Holmes first told us that, I've been listening for them," said Mary, running to meet him.

"What we listen for of music in the air, we'll be sure to hear," he answered, smiling down at her. "If not the angels,—"

"What then — the birds?" said both children in a breath.

"Yes! but something more — it is the listening, the receptive attitude that counts. If we could listen deeply enough we might even suppose we could hear the music of the spheres."

They did not know just what he meant — but were too polite to question. They would ask their governess the next day — or their mamma.

After the repast had been finished and they were ready to explore those wooded aisles, the little girls begged him to come with them, as they had a grotto where the "fairies had a home"; and this they wished to show him.

"Blessed darlings, of course I'll go, and we'll laugh and shout until the fairies flee. Come!" Taking a hand of each, he led the way over bush and brake with light footstep, stopping here and there to tell the names of the trees or to answer cheerily their multitudinous questions.

Mr. Raines took occasion during his absence to speak of him in terms of praise, telling the effect which one of the Sabbath services had upon him personally, and the difficulty of getting a few of the churchgoers among the mountaineers in that neighborhood to comprehend the force and power of his exposition. "But how perfectly impossible it is," he continued, "to give mind and the grasp of comprehension to those who think they know it all already. There is nothing so stultifying as conceit. The other Sunday I was

thrilled by his thought so forcibly expressed, and on walking home I chanced to say something to one of the mountaineers about it rather enthusiastically.

“‘Oh,’ he said, ‘do you call that good? Why, our last man could thrash ’round and stampede all around the pulpit!’”

A general laugh greeted the description, and yet beneath the laugh there was the feeling that in their work here there was the embryonic beginning of community help in the thought line as well as the purely practical.

Mrs. Colin sighed as she looked after him in his slim boyishness of outline, as he sprang across the thread of the woodland stream, to reach a flower on the other side which one of the little girls had desired, but she did not impart to the others the nature of her thoughts.

That evening Clarence and Eleanor had an opportunity to be alone, together.

“I have enjoyed the day immensely,” Clarence said, with enthusiasm. “The ball game especially. Edmund Holmes saved the day. He’s a brick and no mistake.”

“You seem to be so fond of him, Clarence. I don’t wonder, for he seems to have a charming personality.”

“You needn’t pay too much heed to his charms, however.” The smile she loved took away any harshness or jealousy that the words might have suggested.

"Yes, he's an all 'round man — a good American."

"But Edmund has some of the queerest ideas," said Clarence. "Sometimes he seems to me a mere boy in his delight in all kinds of sports and pastimes, then again he seems Socratic, and still again as witty as Mark Twain, and when occasion demands, he is tender as a woman."

"It seems to me you have, all your life, had a dearth of friends of that caliber. I used to think of you as a lonely man, having no mother nor sister, and living always in the law offices."

"And now, dear, you find me, in the words of Locke, 'all child for your mothering, all man for your loving'?"

She smiled up at him with happy assent. It was one of their quiet moonlight walks around the garden and shrubbery, now redolent with autumn's breath of fading bloom. Stepping slowly over crisp falling leaves, they were conscious of change, but happily so. They were on the edge of the dark woodland, where a surreptitious hand-clasp could not be seen.

"What were the queer ideas you ascribed to him? you are aggravatingly non-committal, Clare."

"First I may have to tell you a story. Had you observed how our dear Mr. Raines had a glorious Sunday afternoon drive the other day and didn't get back in time for Sunday dinner? No rushing, snorting automobile drive either, I

can assure you, but a veritable phaeton with the one horse of his choice, the one that a word of his will guide."

"I hadn't observed quite as closely as that, but I can see well 'that thou hast a tale to unfold,'—I can see it by the light in your eyes. Please go on."

"Had you, then, observed the guest of last Library evening, a lady not old and yet not young, the mother of Edmund Holmes?"

"Indeed, yes. Always dressed in white serge or in black velvet, her hair half silvered, but so youthful withal."

"Oh, I was charmed with her wit, her brightness in repartee and her sweet graciousness. She was not one who would pass unnoticed in a crowd."

"Well, there are strange things about to come to pass never dreamed of in 'our' philosophy."

"You make me terribly alert. What do you really mean to tell me?"

"That they, Mr. Raines and the mother of Edmund Holmes, are engaged to be married!"

She did not reply at once. The flash of conscious knowledge which hitherto she had had no right to impart, kept her silent. Had she the right, now that it was known? She would tell him later the conversation she had overheard.

"Are you interested? Look up, Norrie, and let me see what is the matter."

"Your 'Norrie' brings me back. It gives me

a breath of the sylvan shades. Our wood's name. I shall always feel the breath of the flowers and hear the birds' songs when you call me by that dear name. I can even hear the river's song.

"What you have told me is more than gratifying. It does not surprise me overmuch. They seem so exactly suited to each other. You are so much with Edmund Holmes lately that I am growing jealous. He seems to have captivated you. You needed someone like him to get you interested in golf, base ball, swimming, boating, rowing, canoeing. You seem to be David and Jonathan. He isn't a bit like a minister. You have quite as much the air of the 'cloth' yourself. The other night, that open-air speech you made, brought down the house, or, rather, the leaves off the trees!"

He thrust the loose pile of gold and crimson leaves before him in the path. He was a happy, care-free boy now, delighting in her praise.

"He gave me the fullest confidence about that — well, that autumnal romance. He told me that Mr. Raines had loved his mother in their youthful days. That both had spent happy, peaceful married years with their chosen mates, that both had known the cares of parenthood as well as its joys. 'Strange,' Edmund said to me, 'how the tables are turned! Instead of my mother giving me her blessing in the formation of new ties, I must give her the happy send-off.'

"'Isn't it disturbing,' I asked him, 'especially

was it not so in its first suggestion? Didn't it break you all up, so to speak, the sentiment of the past for instance, your father's name, etc.?' "

" 'Well, for a moment, perhaps, but in this case different, for her own name in the world of letters has taken the precedence, and that no fate can change! ' "

" 'Oh,' I exclaimed, wondering, 'Oh! ' "

" And I shall say 'Oh' too, Clarence. How little we thought a name known in two continents! and she so unconcerned, so modestly reserved. It had never occurred to me either that she was the one. What else did he tell you? "

" Do you know," Edmund said to me, " it has seemed to me that it is the most beautiful thing! Those loves of the past — poetic loves, friends of all the intervening years, each true to their vows, and their homes, yet enjoying the most delightful intellectual friendship that this earth can bestow, how flowering with the bloom of a perfect spiritual love. Why, it is a part of heaven on earth. 'I used to worry about her,' he said, 'dared hardly think of a girl whom I might love and marry, for fear I might be led into some scheme of separation that might wound her, and now she is virtually taking that worry right out of my hands. I am as interested in their romance as I could be in a novel — she is my mother, to be sure, but also my child. I shall be the one to give her away.' "

" 'Where will you go?' I naturally asked.

'Oh,' he said blithely, 'a man can always take care of himself. He can be a bird of passage.'"

To Eleanor's sympathetic heart when she was alone, there was something about the circumstance that awoke sudden tears. Was it the tragedy in every life? It was indeed poetically beautiful, this autumnal flowering of sentiment, but was it only for the withering of the petals of hope, in the winter of ill health or of defeated purpose?

Gradually, before she slept, there came to her a vision of a beautiful comradeship of intellectual effort, of work for the world in which selfishness had no place. Youthful love was supremely selfish. All lovers, in their twenties were sublime egoists. They must obey the law of possession. They must be robber barons, and build a wall about their captured loves, and shut out with bolts and bars every other interest. But here! Let no profane hand touch such a tree of life. Its roots may go deeper than earth's center, its branches grow higher than heaven!

CHAPTER VII

"I have wished all day that I could ask your advice about something, Clare. All the time that Edmund Holmes was here with us, I kept saying to myself, what would he have thought if he had known about our week in those forest spaces. Even with all your kindness and Mrs. Nolan's very trusting faith in us, it seemed all conventional, all right and plausible enough to us after our drowning experience, when it was merely the health tonic that you needed, when perhaps it saved your life, but now in the eyes of others — oh, Clare, how terribly condemned we would be, that we didn't 'show up' in our own characters!"

"Not in the least, Eleanor. Cheer up, you wise but doubting little casuist. You were merely a little boy then, and in that lay your womanly wisdom. I didn't know why you clung so determinedly to that boy's clothing, but later, it came to me that you were not the little, rich daredevil after all, but the self-appreciating college graduate and woman of the world, the very wisest of the wise. But I am glad that suit is too worn out to wear now. Eleanor, you were never before half so beautiful." He turned her happy face towards him and kissed her once more on her

ripe lips, and the moonbeams shone in peace above them and the leaves whispered their love.

"I don't believe in waiting a second lifetime for you, my Eleanor,—just as soon as November comes we must go to our little home among the hills. I don't want you to become such a fixture here, even as teacher for the little girls.

"By the way, you and Edmund can sling the French and Italian. I never knew what an adept you are, and felt half a mind to be jealous, the other day, until you gave me one of your swift looks that I understood, and so I forgave you."

She went back to the first question, the thought of that experience so different from the hard world's code, troubled her, although the occult reason of the trouble she could not comprehend just then. Scarcely out of her teens, she had always been ready for any enterprise, but she saw with new vision.

"I wonder, Clarence, if you ought not, some time, to make a clean breast of it and take Mr. Holmes into your confidence? I have fully told Mrs. Colin. He would surely understand. I hate to think that there is any day of my whole life or yours that could not be laid open before him or, in fact, the world. You could tell him. You would know the best way; he is always so confidential with you, you might be the same with him." She could see that peaceful smile of his as he looked down upon her, laughing at her dis-

turbed cogitations. "But, really, don't you think he ought to know?"

"*Know nothing!*" he said heartily, in the half-slang of the day. "There is such a thing, Eleanor," he said this with deep earnestness,— "there is such a thing as the fact that a truth itself may be untrue. More untrue than the opposite, because false to the soul of things. Nothing in the world was ever more beautiful, more idyllic than our one week of perfect happiness in each other, but if you should translate that week into plain prose, nobody would understand. You would do yourself an injustice, and myself as well. So, my love, rest your pure soul in peace."

"I certainly shall," she said with a sigh of pure content, as they walked towards the house. "I shall remember that expression of yours that sometimes the very truth may be untrue because conveying a false impression—false to the soul of things." She reached up and kissed him through the dark of the grapevine arbor, before they separated for the short space of the midnight hours.

The day's work, and the morning sunshine, would soon bring them together again. In work and play, in pastimes and exercises both manual and intellectual, their life at this time was ideal.

"Your friends in the city," said Mrs. Colin the next day, "have waked up to the fact that you have been found alive. We hear something every day to that effect. They want you back, and I

must say that I am a little selfish in the matter, too, for in winter we close this house and prefer to go there for the benefit to the children in their education. Possibly you and Clarence might go too. Winters in the country, in this climate, or even further north, are not considered quite a paradise. Perhaps you may think of it favorably." She had a deeper motive, which she did not reveal.

"It is almost too good to believe, and my dear Mrs. Colin, I owe everything in the world to you. Your absolute belief in me altogether, although I had come to you in peculiar circumstances, has been my salvation. I suppose when a woman loves as I do, and knows without doubt that she is loved in return, and when she has been startled by thinking her friend dead!—dead—and is looking for his lifeless form—in such a case as that to find him alive—to feel that the care which you alone could give him would save him and bring him back to health and happiness, could I have done otherwise than to cast in my lot with him?"

"You were not only right, but wise, dear, and Clarence is to be commended for his worldly wisdom, and wise in all your after course. Few would have given their fortune to the winds as you did, but it will all come back."

"Thank you for saying that. But I realize, as I never did before, that we all owe our best to society, and that we cannot disregard with impunity all her safeguards. In this case I was

true to myself and Clarence was the soul of honor and chivalrous to the last extent, but suppose our nomadic life had been continued beyond the necessity for it until people had discovered our wood's retreat, where would we have been? And suppose we had not found such friends as yourself and husband to shield us and take us at our word, where would we have been? As it is, the dear public did not know but that you found us on the banks and resuscitated us and kept us from a watery grave and befriended us in a million ways."

"Both of you owe everything to your own good sense and foresight. But there is indeed a great thought here, it is the thought of trust, of brotherhood and believing the best of people. I have just heard another piece of news which I had almost forgotten to tell you. Mr. Holmes is to have two calls, one a call to our own city and also one to Portland, Oregon."

Mrs. Colin knew well that two natures so intensely emotional as that of Edmund Holmes and Eleanor were in dangerous proximity. She almost trembled at the thought that Clarence, so secure in her love, could hardly comprehend the danger to his own happiness. As yet, neither of them remotely suspected this hidden danger, and the question in her mind was, should she tell Edmund of Eleanor's engagement to Clarence, thus putting him on his guard, or should she leave nature to unravel her own complications. Both men were of that rare type which America seems

to produce. Clarence displaying but little of the emotional, very much of the efficient and practical; Edmund endowed with the deep sensibilities of a poetical genius with power to play upon the sympathies of his fellows, in short, one who would be a dangerous rival if the preference, which Mrs. Colin, wise woman of society, already saw in Edmund's glance when it turned towards Eleanor, were not deflected to a different course. Thus far, Eleanor and Clarence seemed to be in perfect loving accord, but she could see the danger.

The little girls were determined that their evening story should not be forgotten. Eleanor readily complied, telling them it was so warm and lovely they might have it out of doors, and they crowded as near her as possible. They told her that it was to be the one about "The Doctor's Tame Pig."

The young men had slipped up behind the hedge, in a leisurely manner, but were motioned to from the near distance by Mrs. Colin, not to interrupt. Eleanor and the children did not see them, as she was seated near with the little girls who were all attention, drinking in every word.

No sooner had Miss Eleanor completed her story for the children than a loud clapping of hands behind the hedge called the attention of the ladies and children to the fact that there had been an audience. Edmund and Clarence were now ready to attend the Saturday evening talk in the library.

The Saturday evening audiences were now increased by many of the boys who worked on the farm for a few hours every day. This was also a new departure. It was found that the students in the various schools in the near city were glad to assist in the gathering in of the fruits of the fields and orchards. The State had suggested the plan in order to awaken an interest in the cultivation of the soil, and public opinion had enforced it, for it had become so much a fashion that farmers were besieged for places. The pay was good, and the boys, being employed only half a day, were never overworked, and yet by employment they were kept out of mischief. Nearly all of them begged the privilege of hearing Mr. Raines in his delightful Saturday evening talks, where all felt free to ask questions after the exercises were over. They became deeply interested in the great subjects which were attracting so much attention and such universal notice and comment by the press. Mr. Holmes had something to say here. The conservation of our natural resources, forestry and irrigation was also a vital subject.

They were awed by the stupendous undertakings of the age, the bridling of the streams and the possibility of reclaiming arid wastes of land by the use of aqueducts which would make extensive irrigation possible. The chaining of the lightning to do man's bidding, the reining in of those steeds of the air, the wonderful vitality of

this old world and the possibility of going hand in hand with these enterprises by means of the Press of the country, to know every day the accomplishments of yesterday, and to be one with them all. This — this was what it meant to live in a vitalized community, ready to be awakened to possibilities of existence, not the morose, sleepy existence of the embryo city from which they had emerged and which they were almost ready to go back to instantly, its state of things had changed, a fact which had taken no less than a dreadful catastrophic shock to arouse the inhabitants to the expression of a little human kindness and consideration for others and a little glimmering of this great pulsing magnetic wave of destiny, which swept people before it when they were willing to sail on the ocean of progress.

Both Clarence and Mr. Holmes took active parts in the conversations and both had ideas to impart. As Eleanor was seated among them within view of the little room which had been her haven the first and second night of her stay, she was filled with gratitude for the way in which she had been led. From the dangerous declivity of her impulsive journey with her almost death-stricken lover, from their wood's sojourn without either chaperone or protector, without anything but the protection of her own purity and his chivalry to have come to this beautiful safe haven where the tongue of the world could not touch her, how wonderful it all was!

Clarence had hoped for a little interview with her and was not disappointed.

"What were you and Mr. Holmes talking about so busily this morning before you came over to us?" Eleanor asked when she and Clarence were alone together in the afternoon.

"He was drawing parallels. We were down in the lower garden. I had been following out Mr. Colin's instructions to have the gardener make some changes in the borders, when Edmund came over and we had such a good talk about things in general, and then after a while he became interested in the flowers there. Why, he knew not only all their common names but all their botanical ones and could speak to the gardener with educated authority. He observed in a certain bed that while some were hardy and healthy, flowering beautifully, others of the same species were drooping and apparently dying. He asked the gardener if he knew the cause of it, 'No, I don't, nor nobody else,' he replied, a little arrogantly. 'For two or three years they have acted just like that and there is no use trying to coddle them.'

"'Would you oblige me,' Edmund said to the man, 'by digging down to the roots of this one?'

"He did so, and what do you suppose we found? A cluster of small white grubs which had been feeding on the roots, sapping the vitality. He then said to the gardener, 'Take up those diseased plants, spread them out to the rays of the sun — it is not excessively hot to-day — let them

lie in the sun for half an hour, then sprinkle lightly with sulphur.'

" 'It'll kill them dead,' said the gardener a little ungraciously.

" 'Well, they would die anyway. Try it.' There was an authority about this command which the man had to obey, so he dug them up and spread them out to the sun and air. He was then told to give a dressing of new soil mixed with wood ashes. 'Dampen the roots of the plants well and replace them.' "

"And they did not wither?" asked Eleanor.

"Not a stalk. They look better than the others already."

"But what about the parallel?"

"He would not pursue it; he dropped it."

"I think I might fill it out," she said smiling.

"Oh, I know, you college girls think everything is trite and commonplace that isn't startlingly new, but I can assure you that our friend Edmund Holmes, young as he is, could hold a candle with the best. He has had several 'calls' they tell me, up his sleeve. So you see, Norrie, even from your superior heights he is 'all right!' "

"You mistook my meaning entirely, Clare."

"I couldn't help thinking," Clarence continued, "that if I had ever had any friend like that, any one of my own sex — doctor, priest or pastor — I should never have drifted almost to the brink of suicide. I told him of that one day, — that I came desperately near ending all. He was talk-

ing of you and of your gifts, and wishing you were to have another paper this evening," Clarence said.

"I would like to enjoy the privilege of listening once in a while to yourself and to him. Neither of you are exactly tongue tied."

"There was another illustration of something or other very original and striking. He has a fund of humor, too, and that is one thing that I like about Edmund Holmes, he is just as human as the rest of us and he doesn't try to hide it nor to pull a long face. His religion doesn't make him hypocritical. He isn't always looking for the worst in his fellow sinners, but the best.

"After our wedding, Eleanor, when we go to our cottage home, we must have him as our guest sometimes. We cannot afford to lose such a stimulus to high thinking and happy living."

"You are right, Clarence, we will do that without fail."

On the following Sabbath evening they were again out of doors during the evening, all the family old and young. On coming out, Edmund was a step or two in advance and seated himself near Eleanor on the moonlit piazza, and Clarence, not to be outdone, seated himself on the other side of her on the wide railing. Under cover of the darkness, and Mr. Holmes' momentary turning away to speak to another member of the group, Clarence had a hand clasp from her which brought his heart into his mouth, and a sweet assurance

that all was well, which paid him for days of partial separation from her.

"By the way," said Edmund, while they were seated there, "I was in the city last week and I was asked a thousand questions about this young lady. The report has got about that Miss Norwood, whose house was demolished by the storm, was not after all lost in the ruins of her home but is alive and well;—an honored preceptress in the family of the 'Millionaire, Mr. Colin,' and that she is going to have an invitation to become the principal of a young ladies' seminary, where her salary will be up in the clouds. They so much wish to have her in her own city once more."

"No salary would be enough to make me leave this place, and these dear girls," she answered, "and yet I would like to go back and build up my shattered house and get my poor little cat."

"I feel quite jealous," said Clarence. "Didn't the city authorities have any offer of positions for me? I was one of the city boys, too."

"Well, they didn't convey any such gift through me, at all events," Edmund said, laughing, "but well they might. You would be able to do justice to anything they might offer."

It was perfectly evident that Edmund Holmes had never heard of him as the rising young lawyer of that place who lost his life in the flood. To Clarence, the thought that he had been so tempted in that hour of discouragement to end his life was always a regretful one, and he was in no hurry to

reveal his identity, but the infinite distance between that hour and this, the growth and stimulus which he had gained from association with such minds, and the dear delight of feeling that the girl who had been brave enough to leave everything for him, was sitting by his side and that she was not only his love but his admiration in every way. Had he ever thought enough of her sacrifice for him? He would just as soon that Mr. Holmes did not sit quite so near her. He would certainly like to hurry up their marriage day, and claim her for his own in the eyes of the whole world.

Edmund Holmes, though a young man, was a deep thinker. The older members of the household were present and all lingered, enjoying the beauty of the night and the sweet repose of nature. Deep thoughts were evolved by seeing the most brilliant effects of an electrical phenomenon — the aurora borealis flashing up to the very zenith. Eleanor felt almost awed by the display and under cover of the vines slipped her hand into Clarence's and drew a little closer. Edmund was so full of his deep imaginings that he was, for the time being, oblivious to all surroundings.

He seemed to have a deeply reverential nature, willing to ascribe all such wonders to the power of a Supreme Being.

"When we throw off this mortal frame," he said, "how much will break upon our vision which we cannot comprehend in limitations of the physi-

cal. We shall be likely to know something more of this subtle fluid then."

"What is it?" asked Clarence with avidity, "has anyone ever yet defined it?"

"What is electricity?" several voices echoed the question.

"The books merely say, 'an imponderable and invisible agent, producing various manifestations of energy,'" said Mr. Colin, from the farther end of the balcony,—giving the ready definition of the schools. "Nobody can define it, after all."

"Has anyone ever defined Thought?" asked Edmund. "It has been borne in upon me that there is a great secret here which the world has never yet discovered." He was silent, almost awed by the conception which had been given to him, and he was endeavoring to formulate it.

Eleanor was listening, thrilled with the unspoken utterance and feeling the strange majesty of Mind.

"This electrical force which seems more or less to animate all sentient things, may be part of a trinity of Being — is a part of God! Who knows but it may be largely spiritual force? The flash, the brightness of its display is the evidence to our human vision of something Infinite. We may see it in the aurora borealis, or chained to the earth to do the bidding of man. The electrical force which vitalizes living organisms be they plant, insect, animal or human — vital force, capable of being called into being by man's intervention and

for his benefit, becomes again an unembodied integral, part of the universe when the organism dies, which had by it been animated."

"But might not that, if carried to its logical conclusion, deprive one of the hope of immortality?" asked Mrs. Colin, very gently.

"Oh, no, no!" he continued. "There is the spiritual essence, the *soul*, infinitely superior to the material or the mental or the obvious, dominating it. That, of course, is the highest development of the whole, the very kernel, and is above the reign of death or decay. That is the God in us. It *must* live forever! But the mysterious force which keeps the body alive, which bids the trees and plants germinate, blossom and grow without the aid of man, which makes the grasses grow and gives color to the flowers, which animates all insect life and bird life, and in truth all animal and vegetable life. Does it not go back to its own in the Universe? It may be within call of omnipotent power. It may not, when divested of any earthly substance like a body, be sentient, but may it not be that ethereal substance which we see flashing in the aurora or chained for use like that arc light, everywhere fulfilling its destiny? Every flower-soul has its part to play in this wonderful conservation."

For a little time afterward all were silent. Most appreciative were they of the mental power and force of this young divine. Their good-nights were spoken to him with a reverential tone and they

felt that no light speech or laughter would be appropriate after having such a glimpse of the deep things of life.

The two friends, after Edmund Holmes had left them for his own quarters in the parsonage a mile distant, could now have a little time to think of these things, and to draw a little nearer each other when there were no other eyes to see them, but they could not get away from the deep impression he had made.

"Sometimes, Eleanor, I find myself longing to go back to the city and to do something worth while either in my own profession or in something else. And I would like to take Holmes with me there. I would like him to be in one of the best churches of the city. He would electrify the people. His theories may be in the clouds but there is no mistaking his power."

CHAPTER VIII

"I have a little plan to propose to you, Eleanor," said Mrs. Colin one morning when they were out together.

"Your plans are always workable, dear Mrs. Colin."

"It is this: that you and Clarence should take a day before November, which I think is to be your marriage month, and drive over to your cottage, which you say you have not seen in years. It might be that after spending your honeymoon there, you might wish to go back to the city. Your friends are all waked up now, to the pleasure of welcoming you both back to our city home and yours. I hope if you carry out my proposed plan that all the dear friendships may be continued indefinitely into the future. Now I must go, dear, for my morning hour with the children. There, I see Clarence coming this way. Go say your good morning, and tell him the plan."

The plan proposed met with not only his approval, but his gratitude. Yes, they would do that, it was only a journey of sixteen miles. They would start at daybreak and spend the day, driving home in the moonlight. Eleanor was like one that waiteth for the morning, and she kept repeating to herself the lines:

"My heart is filled with song, the low refrain
Circles again to sadness e'en to tears
As do all heart songs with their human pain
And faint far murmur of foreboding fears."

Edmund Holmes came the very day of their excursion, evidently expecting to see them and to spend another delightful country day. After talking a while with Mr. Raines, passing a word with the little daughters and sitting on the steps of the broad piazza, yet nervously as if that place was hardly his ultimate aim, Edmund Holmes asked Mrs. Colin, who with some light fancy work in her lap was seated near him, "Isn't Miss Norwood at home to-day?"

"No, they — Clarence and she — have gone a few miles into the northern country. Her brother, Walter Norwood, used to own a camp or cottage there, and as he is abroad, they have gone to see if it is still there intact, or if it has shared the fate of so many Adirondack summer homes."

"Oh!" — He got up from his position, leaned over and broke a rose from its stem and, later, dropped it on the ground. He turned and looked full in the face of his hostess. "Mrs. Colin, are they engaged to be married?"

She answered in the affirmative. He walked a few steps away, then walked back, his head bowed. He said some indifferent word that was comparatively meaningless, but she noticed that he looked white about the lips.

"Mrs. Colin," he said, recovering his self-con-

trol, "I have had calls to two churches, and both are equally worthy places. One is in our home city and the other in Portland, Oregon."

"Oh, I hope you may decide to stay here."

"Thank you, but I think it may be Portland."

"I shall see you again before I go," he said gently, lingering a little as if reluctant but yet compelled to say good-by, then lifted his hat and walked rather rapidly away.

"Thank God that I have no sons!" said Mrs. Colin to herself, as her eyes followed him. Near the shrubbery, the two little girls started out from the bushes to "frighten" him, in their parlance. They had been playing "Indian." She saw that he stooped and kissed them both good-by, and the little girls soon came running to her side.

"Oh, Mamma, we frightened Mr. Holmes so that the tears came to his eyes. His eyes were so sad. We are so sorry, but he kissed us just the same."

"And we told him to forgive us, and we would never frighten him so again. Are you angry with us, Mamma?"

"No, dears, you may play Indian all you want to."

"A picture of love's cross purposes, the pains and disappointments of life presented themselves before her as in a vision, but it is all in the plan of development for the soul if these trials are borne with fortitude, she thought. Poor boy! I knew he had fallen in love with her, but she was

totally unconscious of her power. God bless him! But how can we lose him from our winter colony? May some good fortune bring him back. He has been a life-giver to us all, in the sense of being a thought-giver, but he will be the same wherever he goes."

Some months afterward there appeared in a certain paper, under the title "Echoes of the Great Flood," a sub-title "Romance in Real Life," which told certain incidents in the life of two people which, although not at all accurate, had still enough of the realistic element to be believed as being the real circumstances of the case, although so widely different on minor points:

"Four months ago, two young people of our city were mourned as dead, among the many that lost their lives on the treacherous bridge the night of the terrible cloudburst. Both were seen struggling in the seething waters, but were eventually swept away by the swift current among the floating debris of the mill. One of these was a very talented young lawyer, Clarence Bartruff, who had been talked of in connection with our city politics, but was swept away in the flood and mourned as dead. The other was, at that time, his client, Miss Norwood. It seems that the property left to her and her brother by their deceased parents, had been manipulated by sharks, but through the agency of Bartruff was recovered and placed in safe keeping for her own and her brother's majority. At the time, she had the sympathy of a large circle of friends in the unfortunate conditions,

and a glow of pleasureable emotion existed in the community that she had not, by the greed of certain people who were no kin to her, been left in a penniless state to fight the battles of the world as well as her own. Mr. Bartruff's professional skill helped her out of this difficulty and it seems that the young lawyer and herself loved each other; that his fearless daring was the cause of his being swept down by the current—saved at last, by a miracle. The theory is that on the night of the catastrophe, Bartruff, seeing her in the water, had leaped in to save her, but the current being too strong, both were swept away. Now it turns out that they were picked up on a sand bank where several lifeless bodies were found at the bend of the river and were resuscitated by timely help, taken to a farmhouse, nursed back to health, were married there, worked through the busy season like peasants, for their rescuers, then spent the rest of the summer in a pretty little cottage in the Adirondacks. They will now soon return to spend the winter in their native city. Is it not the best evidence that romance has not died out of the world, that an ovation is to be given them on their return? Or is it that the severe lessons by which our city has learned its duty to the suffering, the sorrowing and not less to the happy, has opened the well-spring of sympathy? Clarence Bartruff, instead of struggling along alone now, against the difficulties which beset the path of a young man, is to be tendered one of the best paying offices in the gift of the city, with the full knowledge that no one else is more capable of filling it to the satisfaction of the people. A royal welcome awaits the couple and a house with all modern equipments

has been prepared for their occupation on the site of the one which the cyclone demolished. That God may grant them a long and happy life, is the prayer of the whole community."



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